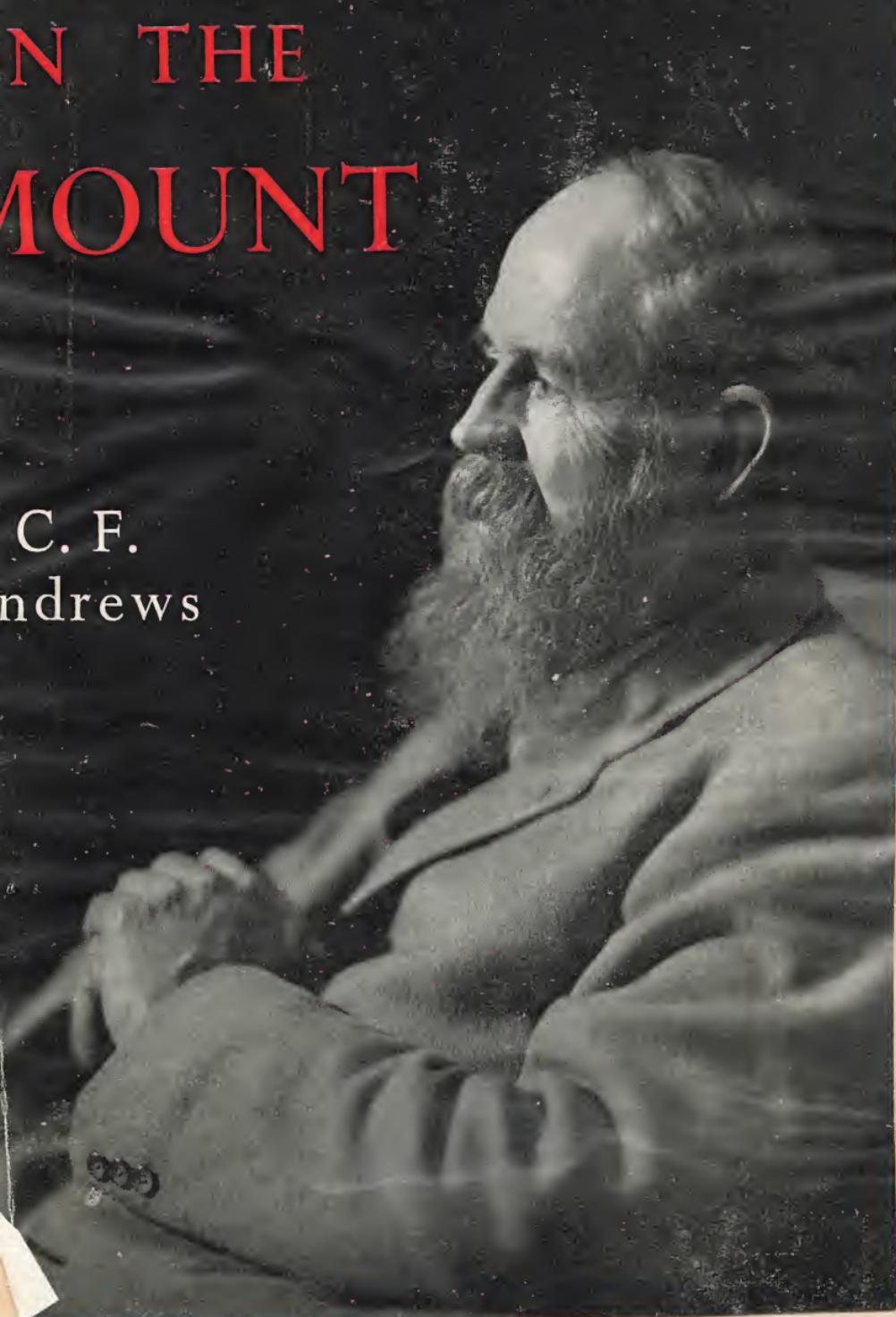


THE SERMON ON

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C. F.  
ndrews



by C. F. Andrews

TRUE INDIA

INDIA AND THE PACIFIC

THE CHALLENGE

OF THE NORTHERN FRONTIER

INDIA AND THE SIMON

REPORT

THE INDIAN EARTHQUAKE

THE RISE AND GROWTH OF  
THE CONGRESS

MAHATMA GANDHI

HIS OWN STORY

MAHATMA GANDHI AT WORK  
HIS OWN STORY  
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THE CHALLENGE

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# THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

by  
C. F. ANDREWS, *1871-1942*

*With a Foreword by*  
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

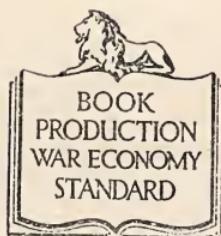
*and an Introductory Note by*  
AGATHA HARRISON

“. . . a real Englishman, a real  
Christian and true man.”

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

NEW YORK  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1942



THE BINDING OF THIS BOOK CONFORMS  
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## Foreword



IN the midst of the world's anguish this book will renew the message of undying peace and love to which the great friend of humanity, C. F. Andrews, bore testimony during his years of dedicated service. Andrews is no more with us, but his work lives in wide areas of mankind, and this book will help in our realisation of truth in a period of darkening horizons.

Andrews was very near to me and to India, where he will be remembered as Deenabandhu—the Friend of the Poor—a name lovingly given to him by my countrymen. It is difficult for me yet to write of him with detachment, and I would therefore quote the words that I addressed to members of Santiniketan during the memorial service that was held on 5th April, 1940, in the hope that these words will convey better than any prepared writing the tribute of friends who saw in the life of Andrews a noble embodiment of the Sermon on the Mount.

\* The lifeless body of our beloved friend Charles Andrews is at this hour being laid to rest in the all-devouring earth. We try to steel ourselves to endurance in this day of sorrow by the thought that death is not the final destiny of life, but we find as yet no consolation. Day after day, in the countless

\* From this point to the end of the Foreword the translation of the text is by Margery Sykes, from the verbatim report of the address given in Bengali.

## Foreword

familiarities of sight and speech, love, the nectar of the gods, has filled our cup of life to the brim. Our minds, imprisoned in the material, have grown accustomed to depend on the bodily senses as their channels of communication with each other. When these channels are suddenly blocked by death, the separation is felt as an intolerable grief. We have known Andrews for long years and in a rich variety of ways. Now we must accept our fate—never again will that dear human comradeship be possible. Yet our hearts grope yearningly for some assurance of hope and comfort in our loss.

When we are separated from a man with whom our relationship touched only the necessary business of life, nothing remains behind. We accept the ending of that relationship as final. The gains and losses of material and secular chance are subject to the power of death. But the relationship of love, infinite, mysterious, is not subject to the limitations of such material intercourse, nor cabined and confined in the life of the body. Such a rare companionship of soul existed between Andrews and me. Coming unsought, it was a gift of God beyond all price. No lesser explanation on the human plane will suffice to account for it. One day, as if from nowhere, from one who was till then a complete stranger to me, there was poured out upon me this generous gift of friendship. It rose like a river from the clear spring of this Christian Sadhu's devotion to God. In it there was no taint of selfishness, no stain of ambition, only a single-minded offering of the spirit to its Lord. The question in the *Kena Upanishad* came into my mind unbidden: *By whose grace was this soul sent to me, in what secret is rooted its life?*

## *Foreword*

Rooted it was, I know, in a deeply sincere and all-embracing love of God. I should therefore like to tell you of the beginning of this friendship. At that time I was in London, and was invited to a meeting of English men of letters at the house of the artist Rothenstein. The poet Yeats was giving a recitation of some poems from the English translation of my "Gitanjali," and Andrews was present in the audience. After the reading was over I was returning to the house where I was staying, which was close at hand. I crossed at a leisurely pace the open stretch of Hampstead Heath. The night was bathed in the loveliness of the moon. Andrews came and accompanied me. In the silence of the night his mind was filled with the thoughts of "Gitanjali." He was led on, through his love of God, into a stirring of love towards me. Little did I dream that day of the friendship in which the streams of his life and mine were destined to be mingled to the end, in such deep intimacy, in such a fellowship of service.

He began to share in the work of Santiniketan. At that time this poor place of study was very ordinary indeed in outward appearance, and its reputation was very small. Yet, its external poverty notwithstanding, he had faith in the spiritual purpose to which it was dedicated, he made it a part of the spiritual endeavour of his own life. What was not visible to the eye he saw by the insight of love. With his love for me he mingled a whole-hearted affection for Santiniketan. This, indeed, is characteristic of true strength of character, that it does not rest content with a mere outburst of emotion, but finds its own fulfilment in superhuman sacrifice for its ends. Andrews never amassed any wealth: his was a spirit freed from the

## *Foreword*

lust of possession. Yet many were the times (how many, we can never know) when, coming to know of something the ashram lacked, he found, from some source, sufficient for our need. Over and over again he begged from others. Sometimes he begged in vain, yet in that begging he did not hesitate to humiliate that "self-respect" which is the world's ideal. And this, I think, was what attracted him with special force—that even through a weary time of poverty Santiniketan strove faithfully for the realisation of its inner vision.

So far I have spoken of the affection of Andrews towards myself, but the most unusual thing about him was his devoted love of India. The people of our country have accepted this love; but have they realised fully the cost of it to him? He was an Englishman, a graduate of Cambridge University. By language, customs, culture, by countless links, the ties of birth and blood bound him to England. Family associations were centred there. The India which became the object of his lifelong devotion was far removed in manners and customs from his own physical and intellectual traditions. In the realisation and acceptance of this complete exile he showed the moral strength and purity of his love. He did not pay his respects to India from a distance, with detached and calculating prudence: he threw in his lot without reserve, in gracious courtesy, with the ordinary folk of this land. The poor, the despised, those whose lives were spent in dirt and ugliness—it was these whose familiar life he shared, time and time again, naturally and without effort. We know that this manner of life made him very unpopular with many of the ruling class of this country, who believed that by it he was bringing the

## *Foreword*

Government into contempt, and they became his bitter opponents; yet the scorn of men of his own race did not trouble his mind. Knowing that the God of his adoration was the friend of those whom society despises, he drew support and confidence from Him in prayer. He rejoiced in the victory of his Christian faith over all obstacles whenever by his agency any man, Indian or foreign, was freed from the bonds of scorn. In this connection it must also be said that he many times experienced unfriendliness and suspicion even from the people of our own land, and he bore this unmerited suffering undismayed as part of his religious service.

At the time when Andrews chose India as the field of his life work, political excitement and activity were at their height here. In such circumstances it can easily be understood how exceedingly difficult it would be for an Englishman still to maintain quiet relationships of intimate friendship with the people of this country. But he remained at his post quite naturally, with no doubt or misgiving in his heart. That in this stern test he should have held unwaveringly to his life purpose is in itself a proof of his strength of soul.

I have thus had the privilege of knowing two aspects of the nature of my friend Andrews. One aspect was in his nearness to me, the very deep love with which he loved me. This genuine, unbounded love I believe to have been the highest blessing of my life. I was also a daily witness of the many expressions of his extraordinary love for India. I saw his endless kindness to the outcastes of this land. In sorrow or need they would call him, and he would hasten to their assistance, throwing all other work aside, regardless of his own convenience, ignoring his own ill-health. Because

## *Foreword*

of this it was not possible to tie him down to any of our regularly organised work.

It would be a mistake to think that this generous love of his was confined within the narrow limits of India. His love for Indians was a part of that love of all humanity which he accepted as the Law of Christ. I remember seeing one illustration of this in his tenderness for the Kaffir aborigines of South Africa, when the Indians there were endeavouring to keep the Kaffirs at a distance and treat them with contempt, and imitated the Europeans in demanding special privileges for themselves. Andrews could not tolerate this unjust spirit of aloofness, and therefore the Indians of South Africa once imagined him to be their enemy.

At the present time when a suicidal madness of destruction seizes our race, and in uncontrolled arrogance a torrent of blood sweeps away the landmarks of civilised human society, the one hope of the world is in an all-embracing universal charity. Through the very might of hostility arrayed against it there comes the inspiration of the God of the age. Andrews was the embodiment of that inspiration. Relationships between us and the English are rendered difficult and complex by their attitude to the privileges of race and empire. An Englishman who in the magnanimity of his heart endeavours to approach us through this network of artificiality finds his way obstructed at every step. To keep an arrogant distance between themselves and us has become a chief element of their pride of race. The whole country has had to bear the intolerable weight of this indignity. Out of this English tradition Andrews brought to us his English manhood. He came to live with us in our joys and sorrows, our triumphs

*Foreword*

and misfortunes, identifying himself with a defeated and humiliated people. His attitude was absolutely free from any suspicion of that self-satisfied patronage which condescends from its own eminence to help the poor. In this I realised his rare gift of spontaneous universal friendship.

This, finally, is what I would say to you who live in the ashram, in solemn confidence, at the very moment when his lifeless body is being committed to the dust—his noblest gift to us, and not only to us, but to all men, is a life which is transcendent over death itself, and dwells with us imperishably.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

January, 1941.

## Introductory Note



IN 1937 C. F. Andrews left this country on what proved to be his last visit to India. He planned to settle down there and write a "Life of Christ," believing he could do this better in an Eastern setting. His friends and publishers, Mr. Stanley and Mr. Philip Unwin, had for years urged him to write this book, and the following letter from an Indian friend—a Hindu— influenced C. F. Andrews' decision to undertake this work:

" . . . You know that during the intimate friendship of all these twenty years I have never asked you anything about Christ, for your own personality has been more than sufficient for me. But now I feel that you must tell me how Christ lived and how He is living in the lives of millions of people. . . . I want you to write in simple English the story of the Life of Christ . . . that is the most important thing you can do. . . . You are the only man who can write this book, for you have lived like Him all these thirty years in India. . . ."

This book—that might have well been his *magnum opus*—was never written; his vital service to India and Britain laid heavy responsibilities on C. F. Andrews—his help and counsel were ever sought. In 1938, writing from Bombay where he had gone in response to a call for help, he said: ". . . I cannot help sighing—a whole week gone with no writing done; but it is

### *Introductory Note*

worth it. What is the good of writing about Christ if one is doing what is not Christ-like? . . .”

After his death in 1940 the manuscript of “The Sermon on the Mount” was found on his writing-table at Santiniketan. Here, in “simple English,” is a book characteristic of C. F. Andrews as showing the strength of the source of his life.

The Foreword, written by his friend, the late Rabindranath Tagore, is surely the finest tribute ever paid by an Indian to an Englishman.

C. F. Andrews did not write his “Life of Christ”; he lived it.

AGATHA HARRISON.

LONDON,

*February, 1942.*

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## INTRODUCTION—I.

(1)

I AM starting to write this book in the quiet verandah of a hospital on the Ridge of Delhi, where I have been ordered by the doctors to take rest from the overwork of pressing engagements that have crowded in too heavily upon me.\*

It has been a relief and refreshment to me, in these days of retirement, to be able to dwell continually on this one theme of Christ and the Good Life. For it had been my great desire for a long time past to find a suitable opportunity of setting down in writing some long-considered thoughts on the Sermon on the Mount, wherein the good life is described. Also I had promised to many friends and pupils in India that, as soon as ever an occasion offered, I would try to explain this Sermon, which forms one of the treasures of the New Testament.

My mind will be more at rest here in this quiet place if I am able now to fulfil that promise. So many times the petition has been made to me asking me to do so, and it seems as if the way is now opened. There are also letters which have come to me from every part of the world, telling me of an invisible fellowship established among many unknown friends by means of my earlier books. My hope is that this volume will help to renew that touch and make it closer than ever before. Let me add that I would gladly correspond with those who would wish to give me

\* 1939.

## *Introduction—I*

their confidence, for I value that silent ministry of personal correspondence all the more the older I grow.

(2)

Very early in my Christian life, while engaged in the study of the Sermon on the Mount, the discovery came to me which every learner makes sooner or later, that Christ's words in these chapters are not a series of beautiful proverbs, loosely strung together, but an amazingly perfect description of the Christian character at its highest point. Christ sets before us, in each moral issue that He raises, the standard He demands from us as His disciples. He speaks to us, not from theory, but practice. His example is all the while before us; and when He tells us that nothing less than perfection is to be our goal, we remember with awe that He has not only set that standard, but also attained it.

Even when we fall far short of what He requires from us, as we continually are prone to do, we are not cast down. For He is wonderfully patient with us and understands all our inherent weaknesses. Our hopes are set on Him, not on ourselves. For this reason He will never lower His own demand upon us. "Be ye perfect," He bids us with good cheer, "even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." And again He exhorts us, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Yet once again He warns us, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

## *Introduction—I*

(3)

In one of the most remarkable movements of modern times, called the “Oxford Group” movement, which has given me great spiritual help in times of need, there is one factor that points directly back to the Sermon on the Mount itself. Among Groupers this goes by the name of “The Four Absolutes.” These are Honesty, Purity, Truth, and Unselfishness. They are rightly regarded as the foundation of the Christian moral character.

To all who accept these standards and seek to put them into practice it soon becomes evident that only by living very close to Jesus Christ in the life of prayer and communion are such “absolutes” anything else than an empty dream. Only by looking away from self to our Lord and Master can we say with the apostle, “I am able to do all things through him who gives me the power.”

It is just the same with the startling need, which the West has discovered, of what has rightly and aptly been called “Moral Rearmament.” We need this all the world over, but the European scene, where internecine war started twenty-five years ago, needs it most of all. But the grave question faces our disturbed and alarmed consciences—“How shall we put this into practice?” Here again I hope to show in this book that we can find more help from the words of Jesus concentrated in these short chapters than from all other sources put together. For it gives us from the life of our Lord Himself His own absolute moral standards in the form of a perfect unity. In obedience to His will, which has never failed, the sorry mess we have made of things may still be set right.

## *Introduction—I*

(4)

But His Sermon must be taken as a whole. There must be no picking and choosing; no saying that this is practicable and that is impracticable; no supercilious pretension that this is in keeping with modern life, while that is now out of date; no whittling down of the force of His commands until they become conventional and commonplace.

It is at this point that we come across one of the hardest things for the intellectuals of the world to appreciate who have lost touch with the simple, illiterate people. We have to remember always that Christ was speaking, in the first instance, on the hill in Galilee to the peasant and fisher folk. He was also speaking in the East at a time when books were very scarce indeed. He was obliged, therefore, to use striking phrases which were intentionally exaggerated in order to stick in the memory of common people. His words are always very homely and simple, while there is a depth in them beneath the surface. To take a superficial view, therefore, or to bind the disciple down to a literal observance would only lead to sad misunderstanding, and this must be avoided. Yet this does not mean that all the life is to be drained out of them till they become insipid. Their striking quality must remain intact even while we remember that they cannot be taken literally.

We of the modern West, especially if we are intellectuals, have to steep ourselves in the idiom of village people if we are to understand and appreciate the Gospels. These are the people who comprise more than ninety per cent. in the East, and a smaller but quite considerable proportion in the West. If Christ

## *Introduction—I*

had given His teaching to a few philosophers, it would have perished long ago. But He was born in the East, lived in the East, taught in the East; and the East loves story and parable, proverb and allegory. Above all, the East loves the practical and concrete in daily speech.

The countless millions of agricultural people all over the world have this concrete, imaginative outlook. A saying is handed down from one generation to another, not by the printed page, but by the well-remembered utterance of some famous man. Even though the Hebrew people were taught to read and write the sacred language from childhood, and have been called by historians, in consequence, the most widely educated people in the ancient world, the vast majority of them remembered by heart their own scriptures. Even today this memorising goes on all over the East, and we, who have lost that faculty owing to our reliance on books, must realise how very little of Christ's teaching would have remained if He had given us merely abstract ideas bereft of their pictorial and illustrative contrast.

We may, for instance, think the phrase "Cast not your pearls before swine" rough and almost coarse, but it is all the more unforgettable. We may think the figure of pulling a beam out of one's own eye absurd, but it has become proverbial all the world over.

Thus those of us who are not used to such pictorial language in everyday speech have to avoid two dangers. On the one hand, we must not be too literal-minded with such figurative language. On the other hand, we must not tone it down in such a manner as to explain it away.

## *Introduction—I*

The sheer marvel of the Sermon on the Mount is this—that in so small a compass Christ tells us so much about the conduct of our lives, and what He tells us can never be forgotten. Each phrase is a picture. More famous sayings have come into the common English language as household words from this short Sermon than from all the rest of the New Testament put together. One further word is this—that the Sermon as a whole can be very easily translated into every living language of mankind, and becomes a priceless possession, adding colour and beauty and homely, well-remembered phrase. No language has failed to be enriched by its translation; and for this reason, especially in India, it should be done, as the English and German versions were done (to name two only), by masters of common speech.

## INTRODUCTION—II

(1)

WHEN the first disciples of Jesus remained together in Jerusalem during the earliest days of the Church, the name by which they were called was 'The Way'; for they represented a new method of living. The Christian Faith meant a 'Way of Life' distinct from that of those around them.

Thus we read in the Acts of the Apostles how Saul, breathing out threatening and slaughter against the Church, was empowered by the High Priest with letters to Damascus to put men and women in chains if he found any who were of the 'Way' (Acts 9. 1; see R.V.). Later on, at Antioch, these people of 'The Way' were called 'Christians'; and so little by little the earlier title dropped out of use.

This historical fact, that the religion of Jesus was first of all a 'Way of Life,' is of great importance for our enquiry concerning the Sermon on the Mount. For it plainly shows us how, from the very first, the Christian community of believers lived and acted in a certain manner as Jesus had taught them. Their faith was summed up in the two facts:

- (1) That Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah.
- (2) That He was risen from the dead.

As a consequence of that faith they sought to carry out in practice this new 'Way of Life' which Jesus had set forward in His teaching.

We are struck at once by the closeness of this 'Way

## *Introduction—II*

of Life' both to that which Jesus Himself lived, and also to the great principles which he laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. All is of one pattern. The resemblance is all the more striking because there is no attempt to copy things exactly word for word and letter by letter. Yet all the while we feel that the same Spirit breathes in them throughout. The Gospel and the Acts are alike. There is no break in moral continuity. The first disciples carry out instinctively, as it were, the essentials of their Master's teaching.

Everything in the Acts of the Apostles is dynamic. Unexpected events, such as the admission of the Gentiles into the Church, are frankly met, and the right course is taken. The Spirit of Jesus leads them forward and shows them the things ahead that have to be done (John 16. 16). Step by step the 'Way' opens out, and they follow it faithfully (see Acts 16. 7, R.V.).

To take a few examples. Like Jesus, Stephen prays for his murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Like Jesus also, the apostles offer no resistance to those who persecuted and reviled them. Rather they "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name's sake" (Acts 5. 41). Again, they took no anxious thought for the morrow, but lived from day to day with supreme trust in God's providing grace. They laid up no treasures upon earth, but served God with a single eye and despised Mammon (Matt. 6. 24).

The 'Lord's Prayer,' which Jesus taught them, was also acted and lived out in a simple and understanding manner. They hallowed God's name, as their Heavenly Father; they prayed daily for the coming of His Kingdom. When they were challenged with imprisonment, they answered that they ought to obey God rather

## *Introduction—II*

than man (Acts 5. 29). So His will was done on earth as it was done in heaven. They also lived together as one family, one household, sharing together their daily bread with gladness and singleness of heart. They even went so far as to refuse to regard any of the things that they possessed as their own, but had all things common (Acts 4. 32).\*

Thus, we are told, they remained steadfast in the 'Apostles' Teaching' and also in the Fellowship (*Koinonia*). This Greek word, with its Aramaic equivalent, very quickly received a peculiar meaning. It came to denote both the unity and variety of their common life. It meant also a sharing in every respect, even of their goods.†

From the day of Pentecost onwards the word *Koinonia* was intimately associated with the One Spirit which they shared in common. They called this 'the Holy Spirit,' and also the 'Spirit of Jesus' (Acts 16. 7, R.V.). It was this Holy Spirit that united the *Koinonia* and also gave it variety of function. Thus there was not only the *Grace*, which came from Jesus Christ, and the *Love*, which came from God, but also the *Koinonia*, which came from the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13, 14).

While they continued to be of one heart and one soul, they also experienced a marvellous sense of individual freedom and initiative. There was nothing merely herd-like in the fellowship they shared together, but, on the contrary, there was a great diversity

\* It has often been pointed out that "The Lord's Prayer" is the family prayer of God's Household. This is dealt with at length in Chapter X, p. 160.

† The Greek words for common (*Koina*) and community (*Koinonia*) come from the same root.

## *Introduction—II*

of gifts. For instance, there was the remarkable gift of 'prophecy,' which made them prepared for high adventures of faith. Within an amazingly short period the leaders of the Church were led on from one step to another in the power of the Spirit. However conservative some of the Apostles might be, they were saved from being reactionary by this Spirit of their Lord and Master. For they were all "led by the Spirit." They found out in this manner that the Way of Life, which Jesus had marked out for them in His teaching, was revolutionary in its moral principles. It turned the world upside down (Acts 17. 6).

One further parallel to Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount was equally significant. They found in this new 'Way of Life' such a superabundance of joy, even in the midst of suffering, that they could hardly contain it. Their radiance was unmistakable. When the Jewish rulers saw their boldness, they "marvelled and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4. 13). This abundance of joy was the very thing that their Master had spoken of in many of His notable utterances, but especially in the Sermon on the Mount. It was the one clear mark of discipleship, which showed that they were really the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the city set on a hill which could not be hid. Jesus had said to them, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad!*" (Matt. 5. 11-12).

He had gone on to tell them that they were not merely to have abounding joy, but also extraordinary *love*; they were to love not merely their friends, but their enemies. They were to do good not merely to

## *Introduction—II*

those who did good to them, but to those that hated and despised them. Only with such love in their hearts would they be perfect, even as their Father in heaven was perfect (Matt. 5. 44).

It was this exuberance of joy and love which was so novel and arresting. It was a 'Way of Life' about which men had no previous experience. Indeed, at first those who saw it could not in the least understand it; and some mocking said, "These men are full of new wine" (Acts 2. 13). That was indeed the outward appearance; the new wine of the Kingdom had burst the old bottles. No such thing had ever been seen in human history—such utter joy and fearlessness in face of death; such utter love for all mankind!

What was more wonderful still, this *Koinonia*, or Fellowship, with its fresh outburst of joy and love, even under the bitterest persecution, was not evanescent, like a meteoric flame that flashes across the sky and leaves the darkness afterwards greater than ever. It persisted. At each fresh persecution it sprang up again in wider and wider circles. The effect of it was just as noticeable later in the simple and graphic accounts of the martyrdom of Felicitas and Perpetua at Carthage as it was when Stephen looked up steadfastly into heaven and prayed for those who were stoning him to death. Through all the different persecutions, down to the last under Diocletian, the same witness was borne; and it was this Christian 'Way of Life' more than anything else that impressed and at last convinced that hard, pagan, Roman world.

Gwatkin, the Cambridge historian, has told the story of those first three centuries, and his verdict has been generally received.

"No wonder," he has written, "if the Christians

## *Introduction—II*

made an impression out of all proportion to their numbers. Conviction in the midst of waverers, fiery energy in a world of disillusion, purity in an age of easy morals, firm brotherhood in a loose society, heroic courage in time of persecution, formed a problem that could not be set aside, however polite society might affect to ignore it; and the religion of the future turned on the answer to it. Would the world be able to explain it better than the Christians, who said it was the living power of the risen Saviour?"

The organisation which bound the *Koinonia* together was of the simplest character; it was flexible, for more than a century, during the creative period. Its worship was centred in the Eucharist, where the *Koinonia* was renewed on each 'Lord's Day.' The 'Way of Life' was learnt, not from books, but from living persons. There were manifold gifts—*charismata*—which each member of the Body had received; and the greatest of these was love.

(2)

My strong conviction is this, that what is needed most of all in our modern world is the recovery of that first radiance and joy of the 'Way of Life,' whereby the earliest disciples were able recklessly and gladly and with singleness of heart to give up everything for Christ's sake in order to bring in His Kingdom. Such a glorious recovery of faith and hope and love has happened again and again in history. It has been like the parable of the Fig Tree and all the trees which our Lord told us to learn by heart. "When they now shoot forth," He declared, "ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So like-

## *Introduction—II*

wise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled" (Luke 21. 30-32). At times when all has seemed quite dead this marvellous power of revival and recovery has come from within. What happened in the first century and the thirteenth and the eighteenth (to mention three instances only) can happen again in the twentieth.

Even since I came to India and learnt to know and love her people the request has been made to me, by Christians and non-Christians alike, that I should one day explain in simple language the real meaning of the Sermon on the Mount. I have promised to do so, and now during a time of enforced rest it has been made possible for me to keep that promise.

No word of Christ has so uniquely attracted the East as this Sermon has done, and it has been a great relief to me, in a time of ill-health, thus quietly to dwell on the teaching of Jesus. What I have now written will be translated into other languages and thus gain a wider public.

Surely the time has come for those of us who owe everything to Christ, and have the power to write about it, to set up the Christian Standard afresh before the world wherein we live today. For we have been confronted with a new paganism which openly denies Him and defies His precepts. The Christian Church is being forced once more to face the choice of 'Christ or Caesar' in a very direct and open manner. Therefore at such a crucial epoch in the history of mankind it is of primary importance that we should turn aside from all questions of lesser importance to the weightier matters which lie at the very foundation of Christian

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character—righteousness, mercy, and truth. Only as these eternal verities, on which the Christian Faith depends, are held up before the eyes of men will those who appear to us to have gone so terribly astray come back to their true allegiance.

(3)

The familiar words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount are not merely a series of very beautiful and inspiring precepts loosely strung together, but an amazingly searching description of the Christian life as it reaches its highest point.

In each of the primary moral issues that Jesus raises He sets before us His own requirement. Always in the background there is His personal example. For He lived out to the full what He taught. He practised what he preached. Not only has He set before us the absolute standard, but also attained it.

Yet even when we shrink before the severity of His judgment and realise within ourselves the apparent impossibility of His demand, we are at the same time singularly attracted and uplifted. For He stands by our side with His infinite loving-kindness ready to help us. He is wonderfully patient with us, in spite of all our shortcomings. He knows how weak we are whenever we trust in our own strength, and encourages us to set our hopes on Him as we go forward.

One thing He always refuses. He will never lower His standard. He commands us, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." And again He claims the highest from us with the words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

(4)

While men's hearts around us, in our own day, have been shaken as never before by the dread realities of war in its most deadly form, there has been at the same time a very remarkable response all over the world to the plea that has been put forward for moral and spiritual rearmament. The phrase itself, when it was first brought forward, seemed immediately to touch the conscience of mankind in many different lands. Along with this the ever-deepening assurance of faith has been restored. We are able to assert with fullest conviction that it is the moral values of life which really count, in spite of the seeming success of 'might' divorced from 'right.' In all such reawakening of the moral conscience the spirit of men has instinctively turned to the words of Christ Himself. We breathe there in the Sermon on the Mount the bracing air of the mountain heights. If anyone else had claimed such complete allegiance from us, we might well have turned away in despair. But a strength comes to us from Him which we are able to make our own; and as we look away from our failures we may dare at last to claim with the Apostle, "I can do all things through him who gives me the power."

(5)

Christ spoke His words to the peasant and fisher folk around the Lake. He did not argue with the pundits at Jerusalem. He was teaching the country people who live outside in the open air; who ponder over their thoughts for long hours of silence in the fields and at their daily occupations; who do not

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study them through books or write them down, but keep them in their hearts.

Christ met their needs in His own singular way by using striking phrases which could never be forgotten. He often put them forward in extreme forms (*e.g.*, the 'beam' in one's own eye), so that they might cling to the memory all the longer. Sometimes they are quite homely and commonplace (like casting "pearls before swine"). But even here there is always a depth beneath the surface which needs to be explored.

There is one great advantage in such a concrete form of speech: it cannot be taken too literally. Christ's whole outlook upon life was the opposite of formal literalness. He is the Poet, not the Doctor, of the Law. To bind the disciple down to the letter of Christ's law would be an outrage upon His whole method of teaching. St. Paul said truly, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3. 6), and this must be remembered concerning all our Lord's teaching.

Yet even here we must be well on our guard. We must not make the precept any less morally exacting. To keep the 'spirit' of Christ's commandments needs a far greater moral effort than to keep the 'letter'; it requires also careful and prolonged thinking. The Pharisees very strictly kept the letter of the Law; but Christ said, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

(6)

When we recollect how many centuries have passed since Jesus spoke His words on the hillside in Galilee,

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and also into how many languages they have been translated, we can easily see how no other method except this proverbial form of parable and story could have survived so long and penetrated so far. If, for instance, He had given His message into the hands of a few learned men for transmission, it would have perished long ago.

But He was born in a village, and spent His youth and early manhood as an artisan. He lived His own life in closest touch with the fields and the hills. He was constantly engaged in friendly intercourse with the country folk, who love homely stories and rhyming proverbs. To these rather than the learned He spoke at first His universal message, and in this plain and direct way He has touched the hearts of multitudes of poor people ever since. For each generation has memorised His words, and thus they have continued to live upon the lips of men. Even up to the present time this memorising goes on all over the world, and so the sayings that Christ uttered nearly two thousand years ago have never been forgotten. Men and women, from childhood upwards, have learnt by heart what He taught.

Nowhere have the sovereign truths concerning what is noblest and best in human character been set forward, for 'Everyman' to understand, so perfectly as in the Sermon on the Mount. Never before or since have they been given to mankind by One who was Himself so perfect an example of what these truths imply in daily life.

The testimony of John Stuart Mill may be brought forward as in keeping with what I have just written. Neither he nor his father was a Christian. Both their minds were severely critical concerning the chief

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doctrines of the Christian Faith. Yet, with regard to the character of Christ and His teaching, J. S. Mill, the younger, gave his considered judgment in two memorable passages, both emphasising the uniqueness of the Christian moral standard.

In the former of these passages he wrote: "Not even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than to endeavour so to live that Jesus Christ would approve of our life."\*

In the second passage he writes: "Whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left; a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers, even those who had the direct benefit of his personal teaching. It is of no use to say that Christ as exhibited in the Gospels is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of his followers. The tradition of his followers sufficed to insert any number of marvels and may have inserted all the miracles which he is reported to have wrought. But who among his disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee, as certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncracies were of a totally different sort; still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good that was in them was all derived—as they always professed it was derived—from the highest source."†

\* J. S. Mill, "Three Essays on Theism," p. 255 (quoted by Bishop Gore, in his "Sermon on the Mount," p. 8).

† J. S. Mill, "Essays on Religion," 3rd edition, p. 253.

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One more writer may be quoted—Thomas Carlyle, who for many years went through the agonies of black doubt, as his book “Sartor Resartus” shows. But one thing he never doubted—namely, the moral character of Christ as the highest that mankind has ever seen.

“Highest of all symbols,” he writes, “are those wherein the artist or poet has risen into the prophet, and all men can recognise a present God, and worship the same. I mean religious symbols. If thou ask to what height man has carried it in this manner, look on our divinest symbol: on Jesus of Nazareth, and His life, and His biography, and what followed therefrom. Higher has the human thought not yet reached: this is Christianity: a symbol of quite perennial infinite character: whose significance will ever demand to be anew enquired into, and anew made manifest.”

Since the estimate of those who were not in any sense orthodox Christians, but rather pronounced critics of the Christian Faith, may carry weight with many of my readers, I would add at this point two further testimonials to the greatness of the character of Jesus from entirely unbiased witnesses.

Spinoza, the famous Jewish philosopher, declared, “Christ was the temple of God, because in Him God has most fully revealed Himself.”

Strauss, who regarded much of the Gospel story as entirely mythical, wrote about the character of Jesus as follows: “He represents, within the religious sphere, the highest point beyond which posterity cannot go: yes, whom it cannot equal, in as much as everyone who hereafter should climb to the same height could only do so with the help of Jesus. . . . He remains the highest model of religion within the reach of

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thought; and no perfect piety is possible without His presence in the heart."

None of these four writers whom I have quoted above would have been able to accept the doctrines taught commonly by the Christian Church, but with regard to the character of Jesus they are unanimous in their estimate of His unique greatness. It would have been easy to collect an anthology from every century to the same effect, and this has been done in some measure by other writers, but these extracts which I have chosen may suffice to confirm the universal view as to the unique character of Jesus, who gave us the teaching.

The sheer genius of the Sermon on the Mount lies in the fact that within its short compass the great Master Teacher has told us the inner truth about our own lives in such a manner that it continually, age after age, searches out our weaknesses, our blind spots, our hidden secrets, which we hardly like to lay bare even to ourselves. Jesus has put before us, not a moral code, but a character, which instinctively commands our allegiance wherever we see it in action.

Much of it, in its absolute form, makes demands upon us that bring us up sharp against the conventions of the present world order, which stretches out before us in its glaring imperfection. Yet we cannot doubt that even here we are being called upon, through sufferings however great, to create new standards whereby God's kingdom may come and His will may be done among men. We are told, from the very first, that we are to seek eagerly the *blessing* of suffering for righteousness' sake, and to look forward to it with exceeding joy.

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(7)

If I may use a paradox, one of the perfections of the Sermon on the Mount lies in its incompleteness. For Christ, the true Teacher, never exhausts the subject which He handles. He is far too wise for that. Rather, He leaves us to fill in the outline for ourselves.

Thus in one part of His Sermon he takes some of the commandments of the Old Law and works out their inward meaning with a few rapid strokes. In the centre of the Sermon He gives us great fundamental principles concerning the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, using the old Jewish divisions of alms-giving, prayer, and fasting, and filling them out with an entirely new meaning. Then in the last section He provides us with headings only of great subjects, which we have to ponder over one by one until the depth of their meaning comes home to us.

Every sincere follower of Christ finds out that after studying these words of the Sermon on the Mount, year after year, they have always new truths to teach whenever they are pondered over. What is even more wonderful is this, that as the centuries pass, with all their vast changes in human thinking, Christ's words never grow old or out of date. There was a certain flippancy in George Bernard Shaw's remark, but it contained a great truth, when he said, "After all, the only one who has come out of the World War with any credit is Jesus Christ."

(8)

The words of Bishop Gore, who first taught me to enter into the spirit of Christ's teaching in this

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Sermon, may well endorse what I have been trying to state.

“All the weight,” he wrote as long ago as 1896, “of Christ’s mysterious person; all the majesty of His tone, His demeanour, His authority, go to give sanction to this Law, which He uttered. . . . His person gives sanction to His words *by inspiring the profoundest confidence, that He who makes the claim will also provide strength to correspond with it.*”\*

I can well remember how this book by Bishop Gore on the Sermon on the Mount captured my imagination when I first read it more than forty years ago. For it threw a flood of new light on our Lord’s teaching, just after I had left college and had become ordained. At that critical time I was leaving behind my long years of studies at Cambridge and was plunging wholeheartedly into the practical life of a college mission in Walworth, where every problem had to be faced afresh in its most practical form. It was just then that Bishop Gore’s book on the Sermon on the Mount came to me as a great spiritual treasure.

What I am now trying to write, out of my own experience, will bear everywhere traces of the debt of gratitude and affection which I owe to the good Bishop, who lived closely to the spirit of his Master. For I long to hand on to this younger generation some of the inspiration which he gave me when I was young. His spiritual help came to me, as I have said, just at the most impressionable period of my life, and he stood out before me as an ideal, far more because of the saintliness of his life than on account of his scholarship and learning.

\* “The Sermon on the Mount,” by Charles Gore, p. 10 (published by John Murray, London).

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So true is it, at all times, that the highest Christian values are uniquely personal and can only be fully made manifest in the lives of great and good men and women. They are transmitted from one generation to another by the living Spirit, who “divides his gifts to each man severally as he will” (1 Cor. 12. 11). The most excellent gift of all—so St. Paul goes on to tell us—is that divine Charity, which far transcends all the lower gifts of wisdom and knowledge and is eternal and abiding, because it is the very character of God Himself. As we grow in that divine life of love we “put away childish things” and become full-grown, looking out on God’s world, as God Himself looks out upon it; perfected, even as our Father in heaven is perfect.

Just as fire kindles fire, so one true Christian soul, who really lives by God’s love, is enabled through His abounding grace to quicken the same life in a new generation. Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi, John Wesley—saintly names like these crowd in upon the memory as we think over the past. They show how profoundly practical is this Christian method of fire kindling fire. The good tidings of great joy which Christ brought to all mankind can best be proclaimed to others in this manner.

So long as this living witness of the Spirit abides, the light will go on shining, the fire will continue to burn, the salt will not lose its savour. Only when formalism creeps in, with its reliance on external observance, will the grace of the true Christian character wither away and perish.

For this reason we need to go back again and again to Christ’s living words and to relate them to His perfect example. We must feel within ourselves, as

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we read and pray, the breath of His Spirit dispelling the mists of our own turbulent thoughts and bringing back the sunshine of His presence. Then, and then only, will our lives be risen with Him and transformed into His likeness.

## Chapter I

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD



(1)

LIKE all the greatest things in life, Christ's words are simple. Their profundity, as they reach the depths of the human spirit, has never been questioned. But to be profound and simple at the same time—herein lies their true greatness.

When we turn to the outer realm of science, we can see how Newton was able to reduce the most intractable quantities of time and space, of matter and motion, to a single formula which still provides us in majestic outline with one of the ultimate laws of the material universe. The simplicity of Christ, as He defines for us the supreme law of the Moral Universe, reveals a depth still more profound in human thought. His word stands true for all time and can never be surpassed.

He offers us, first of all, the name for God, which even a child can understand and utter—"Our Father." Yet the oldest of us are never tired of repeating these simple words each day and finding in them a new meaning. They reveal to our hearts the nature of the invisible and eternal God as Love Incarnate.

For this one word 'Father,' coming to us with all the glow of human utterance from the lips of Jesus Christ, has brought with it a fresh hope to mankind. The old, dead background of dark superstition, born

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of fear, has been shaken off wherever the religion of Christ has spread. A new world of trust in God has been revealed. Jesus Himself first made the music of this Name to dwell in the hearts of His chosen disciples. As they saw Him they saw and knew the Father. At last they could truly pray, "Abba, Father," the Spirit bearing witness with their spirits that they were the children of God.

No one before Jesus came had been able to set forth that Name in such a living manner. For He represented perfectly the child-heart of Man, looking out into the vast universe of space and time, unafraid, humble, trustful, pure, and true.

We read how at one great moment of inner exultation He spoke to His disciples in words they could hardly understand but faithfully remembered, telling them that no one knew the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son should reveal Him (Matt. 11. 27). For He, the Son, was of one heart and one soul with the Father. "I and my Father," He said, "are one."

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount this revelation of the Father runs like one of two refrains of a song. The other refrain, "The Kingdom of Heaven," will come before us later.

"My Father," "Your Father," "My heavenly Father," "Your Father in heaven," so the refrain is repeated as if to win entrance into our souls by its very sweetness and beauty. Jesus' own trust comes to us, conveyed in His words, and our confidence grows stronger. We know that we are welcomed as dear children into the Father's house of many mansions. Heaven now becomes to us no mere intellectual idea. Rather it is an inward experience, so deep and true and simple that

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the lowliest can attain it as well as the greatest. For Jesus has brought these glad tidings from God His Father to all peoples. He has shown us that God is not remote from man, but closer than breath itself, and that He is ever seeking with infinite compassion to win our love. He will never seek to overawe and compel us by force.

Heaven, then, for Jesus is just this—to know the Father. That is life eternal. Only those who are poor in spirit and detached from the world of self can enter that realm. And since in heaven the humblest are the greatest and the greatest are the humblest, so it is with God. It is His nature to be humble in this manner. For He, the Lord of the Universe and the Ruler of the Stars, stoops down to watch over the fall of a single sparrow. His greatest care of all is for the lowliest and the lost; like the woman in the house who has lost a piece of silver, He will search diligently till what is missing is recovered. He will go after the one lost sheep until He finds it. His forgiveness will be so lavish in its generosity that He will run to meet the Prodigal Son on his return, and will bring out the best robe and place his own ring on his hand to give him welcome.

No one before had ever dared to say things like these about God, and if perchance anyone *had* said them, without living the life of sonship, they would have seemed only to be idle tales. But Jesus sealed the truth of them by His own life and death and resurrection. Therefore they will live for ever.

At the same time, as the Sermon on the Mount will clearly show, Jesus will never lower for a single moment the standard of righteousness and purity and truth. God's love is a consuming fire, burning up all

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the evil that offends. There can be no compromise here. Human love, if it is to rise to the height of God's love, must be heroic and majestic; it must explore the depths and the heights. Such love is no feeble, anæmic sentiment that merely feeds on emotion. Rather it is—

"Fair as the moon,  
Clear as the sun  
And terrible as an army with banners."

This splendid imagery, taken from the Song of Songs, is, perhaps, the nearest approach to Love's awful beauty and holiness. Many waters cannot quench it, and its supreme power of sacrifice is past all understanding.

(2)

In union with this conception of God as our Father Christ sets before us also the noblest ideal of human society. It is God's Kingdom, God's realm, wherein His will is done on earth as it is done in heaven. Here again the childlike directness of the thought is no less simple than its profound depth. For if only human society can become God's realm, then its ideal is attained. The purpose for which God created man, as a social being, will have been fulfilled.

The stress which Christ laid on the 'Kingdom of God' as the centre of His message has been thoroughly examined in our own day by many scholars.\* Its use also throughout the Old Testament has been minutely explored. The prophets, ending with John the Baptist, had employed this symbol age after age, and had added

\* See, for instance, Professor C. H. Dodd's remarkable book on "The Parables of the Kingdom" (published by Nisbet, London).

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to it their own notes of encouragement and warning. But Christ filled it with a new content. Just as He had given new meaning to the "Fatherhood of God," so He gave a fuller significance to the "Kingdom of Heaven." He made both these phrases uniquely His own, and used them as vehicles to express His own inner experience.

He had *lived* in that Kingdom. It had already come into the midst of mankind while He went about healing the sick, giving new life to the fallen, upraising the outcast. "The Kingdom of Heaven," He explains, "is like . . ." Then He draws one illustration after another in His endeavour to make His own experience vivid to those around Him. It may be compared to the pearl of great price; the treasure hid in a field; the grain of mustard seed—thus He goes on from one picture to another.

If we are living our lives close to some great spiritual reality which is transparently visible to us and enters into our very being, we try by all manner of means to give to others the same insight that we have ourselves. So it is with Jesus as He tries to teach those who are round about Him. The Kingdom of God is so real to Him that all else appears to be secondary in comparison. The Sermon on the Mount is one of His supreme efforts to describe the Kingdom—its laws, its character, its way of life. Here at last is made manifest God's good news to men. Something quite overpowering has entered into the world, which has begun a new era of humanity itself.

The cost of winning this insight is always great; the sacrifice has to be made; everything else has to be surrendered. But for those who understand the "mystery of the Kingdom" the joy is so supreme that

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nothing on earth can be of any value as compared with it.

(3)

Thus, in the symbol of the Kingdom of God, we come across something that is quite fundamental in Christ's teaching. If He is to be understood at all, we must understand Him here. As we go through the Sermon on the Mount, with this thought in our minds, many things become clear. Here is a clue, a key-note, a refrain, which runs through the whole from first to last. The Sermon begins with the First Beatitude of those who are humble in God's sight, the poor in spirit. "Theirs is," He declares, "the Kingdom of Heaven." Right on to the end He carries this vision of God's Kingdom. It has its own methods of growth, which are personal and spiritual. The pure in heart can see it; the persecuted and the meek are its citizens. To be a peacemaker is to become one of God's children. To love even our enemies is to be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. To pray truly is to say, "Our Father, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

(4)

The prophetic tradition of ancient Israel, which insisted on righteousness in the inward parts and forbade men to trust in outward things, was strongest of all in Jesus. Those who asked for "signs and wonders" were told, "An evil and perverse generation seeketh after a sign, but there shall no sign be given unto it." His mind, highly sensitive and imaginative, had nothing of that religious weakness of morbidly seeking for marvels and missing all the while the silent

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and unseen workings of God's providence in nature and in man. Homely illustrations, such as the seed growing secretly and the fig tree putting forth its new leaves, are employed to show that God's reign had already begun in the midst of men if only they could open their eyes and see its working. But they must not go outside and call out, "Lo, here," for the Kingdom of God was within them—in their very midst.

In strict accord with this we watch in His teaching concerning God's Kingdom His concentration on personal and individual duties, His care for the simple domestic life and marriage ties, His freedom from narrow religious scruples, and, above all, perhaps, His continual appeal to men to use their own intellectual judgment. At each step forward he reaches with singular directness the truth at the centre and brushes away all that is false.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day had almost reversed this process, as they sought to "set a fence about the Law." They refused to obey the new inner call which had come to the conscience of the nation, first in John the Baptist and then in Jesus of Nazareth. They clung to a dead past and hugged to themselves an outworn piety which had become meaningless in a world of moral revolt. Their strict observance of the letter of the Law and their narrow racial prejudices held them bound hand and foot. We are often startled by the severity of Christ's judgment, but nothing less stern in its severity could have shaken them out of the hard shell of religious convention.

Thus the heaven within, which Jesus had come to reveal, was all darkness to them. As blind leaders of the blind they stumbled and fell into the ditch. But Jesus, on the other hand, dwelling continually in the

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kingdom of the Father, had already freed himself from these bondages of a dead past. He was ever ready to let the dead bury its dead and to encourage daring adventure for God's Kingdom. He lived for the age to come, not for the age that was already past and dead.

So it was with His conception of the Kingdom. He is always struggling to describe what to Him is so simple, while to others it seems so difficult. At one time as Jesus is teaching about it the Kingdom is already here. The new age is thundering at the door. It has arrived, if only the blind eyes could see it. At another time it has become for Him a vision of unutterable beauty, a foreshortening of the perspective which is a prophecy of things unseen. No wonder the minds of the disciples could not follow the rapidity of His mind as He passes from one conception to the other. So again and again Jesus is perplexed with them. "Are ye *so* without understanding?" He asks. "Do ye not perceive?"

Our own difficulty today in understanding is very different from theirs. It is due to the scientific habit, so necessary for its own purpose, but so devastating when it comes to analyse that form of poetic thought which only finds its full expression in paradox. Our analysts have dissected each sentence and each word that Jesus uses concerning the Kingdom of His heavenly Father, until it has been almost impossible to put together even the broken fragments. We have to reverse this process if we are to retain the mind of Christ.

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(5)

I have purposely gone over the same ground again and again in trying to bring home how closely connected with the Sermon on the Mount are these two central ideas in Christ's teaching—the Father in Heaven and His Kingdom. Just as the thirteenth chapter in St. Matthew's Gospel might be called "The Parables of the Kingdom," so these earlier chapters which contain the Sermon on the Mount might be called "The Character of the Kingdom." Let me try to sum up what I have been saying in this section.

Jesus came forth from Nazareth preaching the good tidings of His Father's Kingdom. He lived in it Himself and He had been learning its character all those silent years while He worked for a living at His carpenter's bench and cared for His widowed mother and her children. He had striven there to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. With His heart brimming over with the good news that God is King, who loves all His children as a Father, He tries with infinite pains to describe to those who flock around him what that life within God's Kingdom is really like, and how that Kingdom must increase until it covers the earth and embraces all mankind.

When His own chosen disciples are slow to understand Him, He chides them, just because He loves them and because it is of such urgent and vital importance to get the good news He has brought for all mankind right into men's hearts and men's lives, so that they will abandon all lower desires and hold His message fast.

All this will be made much plainer as we go on

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examining each verse in detail and studying each passage in the Sermon separately. But it has, I believe, served a useful purpose to make this one point as clear as possible at the start. Christ takes for granted, among these peasants and fishermen of Galilee, that life in God is bound up with the very texture of their daily lives. He does not stop a moment to argue or to prove it. It is on this basis that all His teaching is built up.

(6)

It may be that, in our own day, there are those who are unable to adopt this religious attitude towards all human life, as Jesus so obviously did. But they may still be able to realise what it means for those of us who have kept our belief in God to look at human life from that angle of vision. The instinctive faith, which is in every one of us, may be revived in and through such a study of Christ's words.

There will be other readers of these pages who are of a different religious faith from that of the author of this book. To them I would offer my earnest prayer that they should seek to find here a way of life which may help them also. For Christ, who uttered these words on the hills of Galilee long ago, was no respecter of persons. He loved all mankind. In the breadth of His human sympathy He has earned the right to be called "The Son of Man."

NOTE

In order to illustrate still further these profound sayings of Christ, we may take three points:

(a) *The Golden Rule*. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them: for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7. 12). Here is a 'rule' of daily conduct which covers the whole range of life as far as society is concerned. It goes much beyond the negative form which we find in Hillel and Confucius, and also among the Stoics. Christ leads us at once to the positive attitude of doing right, and away from the negative course of merely refraining from doing wrong.

(b) *The Two Chief Commandments*. Jesus said to the scribe, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment, and the second is like unto it, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these" (Matt. 12. 29; see Deut. 6. 5 and Lev. 19. 18).

Think for a moment what a complete remembrance of our daily duties this summary provides, not only for the men of highest learning, but also for the simple villager and the unlearned. Even if these two commandments from the old Law had been quoted together in Jewish circles before (see Luke 10. 25-27), yet the parable of the Good Samaritan shows how Jesus widened their scope and made them universal. Just as He gave us the highest name for God,

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so He gave us the highest definition of our neighbour.\*

(c) *Fellowship*. "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mark 3. 35). Here again the religious basis of human life is made universal. No external distinction of race, or caste, or creed, or even family must come before the one supreme fact of the deepest fellowship of all earnest souls in doing the will of God.

It would be easy to carry these different headings much further. For instance, there is the constantly repeated word of Christ, "Whosoever shall lose his life shall save it." There is also His description of true kingship—"I am among you as He that serveth." Indeed, we might go on almost indefinitely; but each one of us may work out this subject still further for himself.

\* Compare 1 John 4. 7-15 for the highest conception of God and Luke 10. 29-38 for the widening of the idea of our neighbour.

## Chapter II

### THE TEXT OF THE SERMON



IN this chapter, with the Greek text before me and various English versions, I shall try to give a rendering which will be in keeping with the commentary which follows. In doing so I shall retain as far as possible both the words and the rhythm of the Old Bible version, which we love so well, while clearing up the sense of certain passages where mistakes are likely to be made by the ordinary reader.\* The chapters and verses will be numbered, as in the Authorised Version, and a slight break will be made in the text where a new paragraph is required.

There is one innovation which will at once be noticed. While keeping, for convenience, the old division into verses, I have tried to represent the rhythmical cadence in many passages, which evidently goes back to the original words of Christ, spoken in Aramaic, and can be clearly felt even in the Greek translation. Fortunately, the translators of the Old Bible, which we still use, had an intuitive sense of rhythm, and in almost every instance they have reproduced in English something of the beauty of the original. Perhaps the greatest translation that was ever made in any language is the passage which begins, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." It would be almost a sacrilege to alter a word in that paragraph.

\* See for an example of this Matt. 5. 22, p. 105.

### *The Text of the Sermon*

Some of the divisions into separate lines which I have made may appear arbitrary. One needs to have not only the scholarship, but also the ear for musical sound. But however imperfect the rhythm that I have adopted may be, it will help to make the music of Christ's words more apparent to the general reader than the long paragraphs of prose in the Revised English version or the division into separate 'verses' of the Old Bible. Some day we may hope to obtain, after many attempts, a translation into English which will reproduce with accuracy Christ's homely words and also their musical cadence.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

(*St. Matthew, Chapter V.*)

1. *And seeing the multitude, he went up into a mountain: and when he was seated his disciples came unto him:*
2. And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,
3. Blessed are the poor in spirit:  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4. Blessed are they that mourn:  
For they shall be comforted.
5. Blessed are the meek:  
For they shall inherit the earth.
6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness:  
For they shall be filled.
7. Blessed are the merciful:  
For they shall obtain mercy.

*The Text of the Sermon*

8. Blessed are the pure in heart:  
For they shall see God.
9. Blessed are the peacemakers:  
For they shall be called the children of God.
10. Blessed are the persecuted for righteousness' sake:  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
12. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.
13. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men.
14. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.
15. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bowl, but on a lamp-stand; and it giveth light to all that are in the house.
16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
17. Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.
18. For verily I say unto you,  
Till heaven and earth pass away,  
Not one jot shall pass from the Law,  
Till all be fulfilled.

*The Text of the Sermon*

19. Therefore,

Whosoever shall break one of these commandments, and teach men to do so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven:

But whosoever shall do and teach them,

The same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20. For I say unto you,

That except your righteousness shall exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven.

21. Ye have heard how it was said to them of old time, Thou shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of being sentenced.

22. But I say unto you,

That he who is angry with his brother is in danger of being sentenced:

And he who speaks contemptuously against his brother

is in danger of a still heavier sentence:

And he who curses his brother

is in danger of the Gehenna of fire.

23. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee,

24. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

25. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge

*The Text of the Sermon*

deliver thee to the jailor, and thou be cast into prison.

26. Verily I say unto thee,

Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

27. Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery.

28. But I say unto you,

That whosoever looketh on a woman to harbour lustful thoughts about her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart.

29. If thy right eye cause thee to stumble,

pluck it out, and cast it from thee.

It were better for thee that one of thy members should perish,

than that thy whole body should be cast into Gehenna.

30. And if thy right hand cause thee to stumble,

cut it off, and cast it from thee.

It were better for thee that one of thy members should perish,

than that thy whole body should be cast into Gehenna.

31. It hath been said, Whosoever shall divorce his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.

32. But I tell you,

That whosoever shall divorce his wife, except for unchastity, makes her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry a divorced woman committeth adultery.

33. Again ye have heard it said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.

*The Text of the Sermon*

34. But I say unto you,  
    Swear no oath at all;  
        neither by heaven;  
        for it is the throne of God..
35. Nor by earth;  
    for it is the footstool of his feet:  
        nor by Jerusalem;  
        for it is the city of the great King.
36. Neither swear by thy head,  
    for thou canst not make one hair white or black.
37. But let what ye say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; for  
    whatsoever is more than that cometh of evil.
38. Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for  
    an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.
39. But I say unto you,  
    That ye resist not evil.  
        Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek,  
            turn to him the other also.
40. Whosoever wishes to sue thee at law for thy  
    shirt,  
        let him have thy coat also.
41. Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile,  
    go with him two miles.
42. Give to him that asketh thee,  
    and from him that would borrow turn not  
        away.
43. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt  
    love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy.
44. But I say unto you,  
    Love your enemies,  
    Bless them that curse you,  
    Do good to them that hate you,

## *The Text of the Sermon*

And pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.

45. That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust.
46. For if ye love them which love you,  
    What reward have ye?  
    Do not even the tax-gatherers the same?
47. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

## *Chapter VI*

1. Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven.
2. Therefore when thou givest alms,  
    Sound not a trumpet, like the hypocrites  
        in the synagogues and in the streets,  
    So that they may have glory from men.  
    Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. \*
3. But when thou givest alms,  
    Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.  
    That thine alms may be in secret:
4. And thy Father who seeth what is secret shall recompense thee.
5. And when thou prayest, be not as the hypocrites:  
    For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and at the street corners,  
    So that they may be seen of men.  
    Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

*The Text of the Sermon*

6. But thou, when thou prayest,  
Enter into thine inner chamber and shut the  
door,  
and pray to thy Father who is in secret:  
And thy Father who seeth what is secret shall  
reward thee.
7. And when thou prayest,  
Do not keep repeating the same words as the  
pagans do:  
For they think that they shall be heard for their  
much speaking.
8. Be not therefore like unto them:  
For your Father knoweth what things ye need,  
before ye ask him.
9. But in this manner pray ye:  
Our Father who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.
10. Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done  
On earth, as it is in heaven.
11. Give us this day our daily bread.
12. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our  
debtors.
13. And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.  
(For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the  
glory, for ever. Amen.)
14. For if ye forgive men their trespasses,  
Your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
15. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses,  
Neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

*The Text of the Sermon*

16. Moreover, when ye fast,  
Be not, as the hypocrites, of a gloomy coun-  
tenance.  
For they disfigure their faces,  
That they may appear unto men to fast.  
Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
17. But thou, when thou fastest,  
anoint thy head, and wash thy face;
18. that thou appear not unto men to fast,  
but to thy Father who is in secret.  
And thy Father, who seeth what is secret, shall  
recompense thee.
19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth,  
Where moth and rust destroy,  
and where thieves break through and steal:
20. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,  
where neither moth nor rust destroys,  
and where thieves do not break through and  
steal.
21. For where your treasure is, there will your heart  
be also.
22. The light of the body is the eye.  
If therefore thine eye be single,  
thy whole body shall be full of light.
23. But if thine eye be evil,  
the whole body shall be full of darkness.  
If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness,  
How great is that darkness!
24. No man can serve two masters:  
For either he will hate the one and love the  
other;  
or hold to the one, and despise the other.  
Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

*The Text of the Sermon*

25. Therefore I say unto you,  
Be not anxious for your life,  
    what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink;  
Nor yet for your body,  
    What ye shall put on.  
Is not the life more than food,  
    and the body than raiment?

26. Behold the birds of the air:  
    For they sow not, neither do they reap, nor  
        gather into barns;  
    And yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.  
    Are ye not of more value than they?

27. Which of you, by being anxious, can add one cubit to his stature?

28. And why are ye anxious about raiment?  
    Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.  
    They toil not, neither do they spin.

29. And yet I say unto you,  
    That Solomon in all his glory  
        Was not arrayed like one of these.

30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass,  
    which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven,  
    Shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31. Therefore be not anxious, saying,  
    What shall we eat?  
    Or, What shall we drink?  
    Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32. For after all these things do the pagans seek.  
    For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

## *The Text of the Sermon*

33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;  
and all these things shall be added unto you.
34. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow:  
For the morrow will be anxious for itself.  
Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

## *Chapter VII*

- 1 and 2. Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.
3. And why beholdest thou the splinter that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam which is in thine own eye?
4. Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the splinter from thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?
5. Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye; and then thou shalt see clearly to pull the splinter out of thy brother's eye.
6. Give not that which is holy to the dogs,  
Lest they turn again and rend you.  
Neither cast ye your pearls before swine,  
Lest they trample them under their feet.
7. Ask, and it shall be given to you;  
Seek, and ye shall find;  
Knock, and it shall be opened to you.
8. For every one who asks receives;  
And he who seeks finds;  
And to him who knocks it shall be opened.

*The Text of the Sermon*

9. Which among you will give his son a stone if he asks for bread?
10. Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?
11. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good gifts to them that seek him?
12. Therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.
13. Enter in by the narrow gate:  
For wide is the gate, and broad is the way,  
that leadeth to destruction,  
And many there be who go in thereby.
14. But narrow is the gate, and straitened is the way,  
that leadeth unto life,  
And few there be that find it.
15. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but at heart they are ravening wolves.
16. Ye shall know them by their fruit. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?
17. Even so a good tree beareth good fruit;  
But a bad tree beareth evil fruit.
18. A good tree cannot bear evil fruit,  
Neither can a bad tree bear good fruit.
19. Every tree that beareth not good fruit is cut down,  
and cast into the fire.
20. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.
21. Not every one that said unto me, Lord, Lord,  
shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he  
that doeth the will of my Father which is in  
heaven.

*The Text of the Sermon*

22. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?
23. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.
24. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock:
25. And the rain descended,  
And the floods came,  
And the winds blew,  
And beat upon that house;  
But it fell not: for it was founded on a rock.
26. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand:
27. And the rain descended,  
And the floods came,  
And the winds blew,  
And beat upon that house;  
And it fell: and great was the fall of it.
28. (And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrines:
29. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.)

## Chapter III

### THE BEATITUDES



(1)

CHRIST begins His Sermon by describing to us the character of the Good Life which is truly blessed in God's sight. He changes the values which men put upon human existence and shows that real blessedness consists not in what the world regarded as happiness, but in the joyous freedom which comes from responding to the will of God and being at peace through perfect love and sacrifice with our fellow-men. No other blessing, He would say to us, is to be compared with this!

The Kingdom of God, He tells us, is to be found, first of all, within the heart, and then only can it be worthily expressed without. It springs from an inner disposition towards goodness, settled and steadfast, and does not depend primarily on any outward form or observance. As we gradually grow in likeness to the character of our heavenly Father (for that is what it means to be called "sons of God") we find from our own experience what the blessed life really is. The reward is there before us—our heavenly Father's own recompense to His children. It consists in a transformed character. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are filled; those who are merciful obtain mercy; those who are pure in heart see God; those who are peacemakers are called God's children; those who are meek and lowly in heart find peace.

## *The Beatitudes*

Once I was troubled by the thought that to seek any reward at all might have a taint of selfishness about it. But Charles Gore pointed out to me that it is the *nature* of the reward that is the real question. If the reward of goodness is to grow in goodness, if the reward of humbleness of heart is to become more truly humble, if the reward of growing in purity of heart is to gain a clearer vision of God, then it is absurd to talk of selfishness with reference to such rewards as these.

Again, the mere negative suppression of desire is often harmful and even dangerous. Christ's warning about the house that is left "empty, swept, and garnished"—only to be filled afterwards with seven other evil spirits more wicked than the first—is a lesson for all time. What is required most of all is to change the *character* of the desire, to set our affections on things that are above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3. 2). Desire for those things—desire to grow in unselfishness, purity, love, and truth—ought to be boundless. The joy of *that* reward was the joy which Christ Himself had set before Him when He endured the Cross, despising the shame (Heb. 12. 2).

This, however, does not mean that no strong outward discipline is ever needed and that no 'rules' for our own conduct are required. Far from it; the Sermon itself will teach us later that we may have to cut off relentlessly some things that offend. It will also show us how we must never be content with good sentiments divorced from outward action. Nevertheless, from first to last, the Sermon makes clear that the outward discipline must be *self*-discipline: the outward 'rule' must carry the conscience with it; the outward actions, that are really fruitful, must spring from life itself,

## *The Beatitudes*

like the fruit on a good tree; or, as Christ puts it in another passage, they must arise out of an "honest and good heart."

(2)

This inwardness is the key-note of the New Testament; that is why it is called the 'New Testament' as compared with the 'Old.' It was for this very reason that Jesus, in the most solemn moment before the Passion, took the cup and blessed it and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Drink ye all of this, for this cup is the New Testament in my blood: do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11. 25). He was directly pointing back to one of the noblest passages in the book of the prophet Jeremiah, where the Lord said, "This is the Covenant (Testament) that I will make with them; After those days, I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31. 34).\*

The Old Testament, with its stern discipline of the Law, had been based upon commandments which, for the most part, dealt with external acts. "Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not commit adultery." A penalty was attached to each, which was just as external as the commandment itself. Even the sacrifices to be offered, as the Epistle to the Hebrews pointed out, were external things, a mere shadow of true penitence, not the 'thing in itself.' Only when

\* The Greek word (Diatheke) is translated in some passages as Covenant and in others as Testament. It contains both meanings. (Compare Hebrews 9. 15, where it is translated 'Testament' and Hebrews 10. 16, where the same word is translated 'Covenant'.)

## *The Beatitudes*

Christ came, who could truly say from the heart, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," could the purity of inward motive be perfectly expressed.

The New Testament, written in the heart, expresses this higher righteousness which Christ came to fulfil. It is, in its essence, the blessed life of God's children, which they are able to lead here and now. That which the old Law and the Prophets had always pointed forward to as the goal of all God's stern discipline was to be completed in this inward manner. That which prophets and kings desired to see, and had not seen; and to hear, and had not heard, that perfect righteousness written by God Himself in the inward heart of man—had been at last revealed to the world in Jesus Christ (Luke 10. 24).

(3)

*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

All through the Old Testament, as we have just seen, this lowly spirit of dependence upon God alone for help and support was sought for in prayer by the noblest and best of the prophets and psalmists. When the oppressor became too strong for them, and their sufferings grew more and more intense, they left their cause in God's hands. These men of noble character, along with the women who were equally noble, are constantly referred to in the Psalms as the 'poor.' They are contrasted with the proud and rich, who trust in their own might and not in God.

We may take one plain example of this from Psalm 72, verses 12-15: "He shall deliver the poor when he crieth; the needy also, and him that hath no helper.

### *The Beatitudes*

He shall be favourable to the simple and needy, and preserve the souls of the poor. He shall deliver their souls from falsehood and wrong: and dear shall their blood be in his sight."

Here, while literal poverty is by no means excluded from the picture, it is obvious that the word goes much further, and contains a spiritual meaning also. The 'poor' and the 'needy' are those who have suffered terribly from the wicked and yet gone on trusting in God all the while. Even though falsehood and wrong appear to triumph, they continue seeking God in prayer for deliverance, knowing that man's help is vain.

An even closer and more beautiful example of this meaning of the word 'poor' may be found in Mary's song of rejoicing when she sang:

" My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour,  
For he hath regarded  
The lowliness of his handmaiden.  
For behold from henceforth  
All generations shall call me blessed."

She goes on to sing how God has put down the mighty from their seats and has exalted the humble and meek; how God has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent empty away.

Her complete detachment from the might and power of the world, together with her humble dependence upon God, is just what Jesus meant in His first word of blessing. Mary, His mother, was blessed because she had this special gift. Blessed, also, are the saints in every age of the Church who have kept to the end this humble trust in God.

## *The Beatitudes*

There is, indeed, a blessing to mankind in actual poverty voluntarily borne for Christ's sake, as St. Francis of Assisi showed, together with his joyful band of 'God's troubadours' who went about singing for joy in the rough homespun garments of the poor. St. Francis himself took poverty to be his bride, for Christ's sake. Even a literal poverty that is *not* voluntary, but a birth inheritance, has often proved in God's hands a wonderful blessing, while riches have often proved themselves to be a curse.

Christ's words were, in the first instance, addressed to His own disciples, who followed Him. Though they had never suffered extreme penury, they were surely blessed when compared with the rich and powerful who lived in Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin. If we read carefully the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, from the twentieth verse onwards, we shall understand still further Christ's blessing of the 'poor.' For He describes them there as 'babes' in their simplicity as contrasted with the worldly-wise and prudent. "Come unto me," He cries, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11. 28-30).

*"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."*

In this Beatitude we are back again in the language and metaphor of the Old Testament, where humility (the poor in spirit) always goes with a contrite heart. The best-known example of this is the great verse in Isaiah 57. 15:

## *The Beatitudes*

“Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

We have here represented by the prophet the character which Christ calls blessed. To be contrite in this sense is to “dwell with the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy.” In the burning light of that presence we cry out in our unworthiness, “Woe is me, for I am undone: for I am a man of unclean lips and dwell among a people of unclean lips; and mine eyes have seen the Lord, the Lord of Hosts” (Isa. 6. 5).

When once this spirit of lowly penitence has filled our hearts in our approach to God, we find with joy that we have truly entered into a blessed realm of consolation and peace.

This second blessing is closely attached to that given to the ‘poor’ as contrasted with the proud and prosperous, who have left God out of account in the midst of their worldly successes. There is also an echo of the Old Testament prophecy in the blessing that follows. “They shall be comforted,” says Jesus; and our thoughts at once go back to the words, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned” (Isa. 40. 1-2).

Yet while this reference to the Old Testament is clearly marked, it does not exhaust the meaning, which is quite universal. All sorrow and suffering, Christ would tell us, has its blessing, if only we turn to God and do not become bitter and rebellious. Indeed, the

### *The Beatitudes*

experience of all the ages has been this, that in the midst of the deepest sorrow there is a sure and steadfast comfort given to us, if only we bring our grief humbly to God, who can create a blessing for us even out of the sorrow itself.

*“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”*

We shall find the meaning of this third blessing more clearly expressed if we go to the psalm from which it is a full quotation. The word of Christ is taken directly from Psalm 37. “Fret not thyself,” the psalm begins, “because of the evildoers; trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land.” This opening word is the main subject of the psalm, and it is repeated over and over again in different forms. For instance, we have the words “Those who wait upon the Lord shall inherit the land,” and, again, the verse from which Christ’s word of blessing is taken, “The meek shall inherit the land.”

To paraphrase very briefly the psalm itself. We see evil now prospering in the world and flourishing like a green bay tree. What, then, are *we* to do, who trust absolutely in God’s promise that His own righteousness shall prevail over the wicked? Are we to become bitter at heart and lose our faith and give up our belief in God’s justice? No, indeed. We must do exactly the opposite. We must commit our ways unto the Lord and look up to Him and trust Him even while we have to suffer persecutions and oppressions. We must leave the final results in His hand, being assured that at the last His promise will be fulfilled. It may be that things will reach their very worst before they get better, but we must not lose faith on

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that account. We must go on enduring to the end, with the assurance that God's purpose will finally be accomplished. The 'reward' of such brave endurance of adversity is this, that at last God's own character of righteousness will be clearly vindicated and the cause of the 'poor' and the 'meek' will triumph. The prosperity of the wicked will cease, and the 'meek' will inherit the land, which the Lord had promised to give them.

It has sometimes been argued that the words "inherit the earth" break through the sequence of purely spiritual promises and rewards; but if we keep in mind that the whole verse is a quotation from the psalm which I have paraphrased above, we shall not be troubled with any question of that kind; for even though God's promise to Israel had in the past a material basis, the spiritual factor—namely, the vindication of God's righteousness—is the main concern.

The exact difference between the 'poor' and the 'meek' (as these two words are used in the Psalms, from which our Lord quotes) is very slight indeed. They both represent the character of those who in the face of injury and oppression commit their ways entirely into the hands of God, with the faith and assurance that He will vindicate the right and bring justice to pass by His own act. They *suffer* instead of taking the law into their own hands; they refuse to answer violence with violence.

(4)

It may be well to pause at this point and look back on these three Beatitudes of the 'poor,' the 'contrite,' and the 'meek,' taken together, as representing the

## *The Beatitudes*

type of character that can be traced back to the Psalms and the Prophets.

We can see how very gradually the noblest of the Old Testament saints learnt the hard lesson that whenever they were oppressed, whether by individual or national disaster, the true pathway of deliverance was to draw near to God in prayer. They must refuse to assert themselves; they must regard the sufferings which they have had to undergo as a chastening of their own inner spirit, and therefore a blessing. By not outwardly resisting the oppressor, but by committing their cause entirely into God's hands and trusting in His arm alone, the final victory of righteousness and truth is won. God justifies them, and they are thus in a wonderful way, which both humbles and uplifts, fellow-workers with God (see 2 Cor. 6. 1).

The noblest of all the passages in the Old Testament where this great thought is expressed is the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. There the meek and suffering servant, who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, opened not his mouth, but bore the sins of his people. He humbled himself and was cut off by oppression. For the transgression of his people was he stricken.

We know, from continual references, how very deeply this Old Testament prophecy appealed to Christ, and how definitely it shaped His own course towards the end. At one time I used to think of this passage from Isaiah as quite unique in the Old Testament, but more recently I have found out how many other passages in the Psalms and Prophets strike the same note, though never, perhaps, with such fullness. I have also learnt how there was always a community (what Isaiah calls a 'remnant') that had continued all

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along to adopt this attitude of the 'poor' and the 'meek' towards life, and had not been led away by thoughts of material triumphs and vengeance on God's enemies who were their own oppressors.

The suffering righteous were often quite literally poor; but, as we have seen, literal poverty is only a part of Christ's meaning, which always goes very much deeper. They also suffered great pain, but their mourning also went deeper. They were also meek and unresisting towards their oppressors, but their meekness itself went deeper. In every case the universal note is struck by Christ in these His opening words of blessing. He leaves the local circumstances behind. Those circumstances are supremely interesting and go to show the background of one very difficult passage which comes later, where Christ tells us to resist not evil. But however deeply rooted in the soil of Palestine Christ's teaching is, it always stretches out from thence in its universal appeal to all mankind.

(5)

To sum up much of what has gone before, we can see, when we think about it in the light of history, that the Kingdom of God which Jesus preached and wherein He lived was altogether different from that kingdom of the Roman Empire, which had been built up with 'blood and iron.' It differed also from the Jewish State, that was all the while seething with revolt. Between these two forces of violence, the Roman and the Jewish, a vicious circle had been formed, which had to be broken through if God's true message to mankind was to be carried on to future generations.

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There was *one* band of simple and poor people which came nearer to Christ's own idea of God's Kingdom than any others. They were waiting, like the old prophets and psalmists, for redemption in Jerusalem, and were constantly engaged in prayer that God's own deliverance might appear. With these, from His youth up, Jesus felt a sacred kinship. They were, along with His own disciples, the 'little flock' to whom the Father in His good pleasure had given His kingdom.

It was with these in view that Jesus pronounced His first blessings. Though the setting is made so general that we can feel each one to be appropriate to ourselves, yet the more we study them, the more we find them to be grounded in the soil of Jewish history, and also to represent the actual daily life of those who followed Christ and became the first leaders of the Christian community. This tiny band of the earliest disciples, more nearly than any other body of Christians in later generations, was enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to put them into action.

Later in the Sermon on the Mount we shall find how Jesus makes clearer still this Way of Life, whereby men suffer rather than do violence; commit their cause to God in prayer rather than take retaliatory or punitive action on their own account. Thus these first Beatitudes are very closely interwoven into the fabric of the Sermon on the Mount, and all that Christ says later about forgiveness of injuries and doing good to those that hate us is in keeping with the Beatitudes wherewith He begins His Sermon.

## Chapter IV

### THE BEATITUDES

(continued)

\*

*“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”*

WE have some very helpful analogies here from the Book of Psalms, even though this Beatitude is not a direct quotation. The two verses which come closest are the following:

“Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks: so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God—yea, even for the living God. When shall I come and appear before the presence of God?” (Ps. 42. 1-2).

“O God, thou art my God: early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh also longeth after thee, as a barren and dry land where no water is” (Ps. 63. 1-2).

For beauty of expression these passages from the Psalms, revealing the desire of the soul for God, have rarely been surpassed. Along with the Psalm of the Shepherd (Psalm 23) they form some of the most cherished and dearly loved verses in the Psalter.

We note at once how Christ takes the desire, which is in the human heart, and raises it to the highest object of all—righteousness. We may compare a later saying of Jesus in this Sermon: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

### *The Beatitudes*

This search must be single-minded and passionate if it is to be supreme in our lives. Half-heartedness and lukewarmness will not be of any permanent effect here. Only whole-heartedness will prevail. There is a famous passage in Seeley's "Ecce Homo," which I came upon suddenly when I was young. It left such a deep impression on me that I would like here to quote it in full, because only thus can its complete sense and its greatness be grasped. Seeley is contrasting Christ and John the Baptist. "Christ," he says, "was to baptize with a holy spirit and with fire. John felt his own baptism to have something cold and negative about it. It was a renouncing of definite bad practices. The soldier bound himself to refrain from violence, the tax-gatherer from extortion. But more than this was wanting. It was necessary that an enthusiasm should be kindled. The phrase 'baptize with fire' seems at first sight to contain a mixture of metaphors. Baptism means cleansing, and fire means warmth. How can warmth cleanse? The answer is that moral warmth does cleanse. No heart is pure that is not passionate; no virtue is safe that is not enthusiastic. And such an enthusiastic virtue Christ was to introduce."

We may judge our own motives by this simple test. When anyone is really hungry or thirsty, the longing for food and drink becomes almost unbearable until it is satisfied. Are we at all able to say that this hunger and thirst for righteousness is in the same way the absorbing passion of our lives? Is our eye 'single' in this respect? If we can truly answer 'Yes,' then our whole body will be full of light, and there will be no doubt in anyone's mind, as they meet us day by day, as to what our ruling motive is.

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One of our Lord's most difficult parables may illustrate this. Whatever else the parable of the Unjust Steward may mean, Jesus clearly intended it to be an example to us of an urgency on the part of the steward which would not brook a moment's delay. Jesus pictures to us the unjust steward saying, "Take thy bill and write down *quickly*," and then comments sadly, "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." We are not, that is to say, so seriously in earnest about the heavenly treasure of a good life, that is within our grasp, as the children of this world are concerning their earthly treasure. We are not hungering and thirsting after righteousness in the same way that men of the world hunger and thirst after the mammon of unrighteousness.

The reward which our Lord promises to those who truly hunger and thirst is that they shall be filled. Their eager longing and desire for righteousness shall be fully satisfied. If we really desire goodness and go on desiring it with all seriousness of purpose, praying and longing and seeking, Christ pledges us that we *shall* be good. There is only one thing that can make us fail—namely, to cease to hunger and thirst for it. To cease to pray for it, to cease to strive for it—that spells failure indeed!

*"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."*

There is today in the world a spirit which glories in force as a means of attaining the end in view, and regards pity as a weakness which must be altogether disciplined out of the strong and virile nations. Sparta, in the ancient world, defended this form of national

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pride, and regarded even a woman's tears as unworthy of a great State and a great nation. There is no need to mention particular nations in our own times, for, alas! this spirit, which is the very opposite of compassion, is in the atmosphere we breathe, and has its votaries among every people.

Deeply embedded in the Roman rule, which crushed revolt after revolt in Galilee during the years when Jesus was a boy in Nazareth, there was a method of 'frightfulness' so terrible that the highways were lined with bodies which lingered for days, writhing in agony on crosses set up on either side of the road. Jesus would almost certainly have seen this very sight, since it was meted out as a vindictive punishment to the city of Sepphoris, which was only five miles away from His own home. In contrast with this spirit, Christ places at the very centre of the life that is truly blessed mercy and forgiveness, pity and compassion. In His own life we read continually how "he was moved with compassion." He wept over Jerusalem and uttered over the beloved city His tenderest lament. On the Cross He appealed for pity from those who stood by, with the poignant cry, "I thirst." The Stoical attitude, which regarded any such appeal for pity as weakness, was contrary to all His life and teaching.

Yet He was never a sentimentalist, indulging in a false pity, which merely excites the emotions without any corresponding action. Any such profession without practice is rebuked by Him in the sternest manner possible.

The blessing which Christ offers to the merciful is that God will show them mercy and forgive them. St. Paul exhorted his disciples in Asia Minor, "Be ye

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kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4. 32). And, again, we read in the Epistle of St. James how "the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." It is God's pity and compassion which is the source of our own. Christ tells us that as we forgive men their trespasses even so God will forgive us.

*"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."*

Once I asked an aged friend in India, who was not a Christian, what he regarded as the most beautiful verse in the Bible. He referred me to this verse, and said that it could not be surpassed.

We are right, of course, in taking the words, first of all, in their restricted sense of purity and innocence from sensual sins—those evil thoughts and deeds which so terribly defile the soul. But there is a still wider use that Christ must surely have had in His mind at the same time; for it runs through all His teaching. He meant to cover by this blessing that cleanness of heart which abhors all falsehood and duplicity, which is the very soul of truth and uprightness. For much deeper even than the stain of sensual sins, in His pure eyes, was the stain of sinful and deliberate deceit, that 'lie in the soul' which He called 'hypocrisy.'

I have sometimes heard the Fifteenth Psalm described as the psalm of the true gentleman. It begins:

*"Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle:  
Or who shall rest upon thy holy hill?  
Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life,*

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And doeth the thing which is right,  
and speaketh the truth from his heart.  
He that hath used no deceit in his tongue,  
Nor done evil to his neighbour,  
and hath not slandered his neighbour."

This sensitiveness to every touch of purity and truth is contained in the heart-cleansing which our Lord requires from His disciples if they are to follow Him faithfully to the end.

It may be asked by us, who are not sinless as He was, "How can we ever hope for this blessing of seeing God face to face, when we have already lost our innocence of heart and cannot even check the impure thoughts that rise against our will?"

Our Saviour does not deal directly here with that deep cry which rises from the stricken soul when it realises that innocence has gone and only impurity remains:

"Wash me throughly from my wickedness,  
And cleanse me from my sin" (Ps. 51).

But we have already seen how, in His earlier blessings, He has expressed His love and pity for the lowly and contrite heart, and we know how He drew near to the publicans and sinners and invited them to draw near to Himself.

Newman, in the last lines of his great hymn, looks forward to the day when the paradise of innocence will be regained. He ends:

"And with the morn those angel faces smile,  
Which I have loved long since and lost a while."

And everyone who longs with all his heart for that

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morning to break on his own darkened life has the pledge and promise from Jesus Himself that He will give him rest and peace.

Emphasis needs to be laid on the fact that, in the essential teaching of Jesus, the impurity which comes from acting a double part—the lie in the soul—where a man professes to be religious while harbouring within his heart every selfish and covetous thought, leads to the worst results of all. “From within,” Christ warned the Pharisees, “out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7. 21-23). It will be noticed that the sensual evils take up only a small part of the terrible list which Christ draws up.

His judgment on the Scribes and Pharisees was far sterner than on those open sinners who were well known to be living in sin of a sensual nature and were already suffering punishment both in the eyes of the world and in their own consciences for doing so. His remedy for such sensual sin was strong as well as pitiful. “If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out.” His commanding love in all its purity was able to win through with these. Sinners flocked to hear Him. Mary Magdalen became one of the chief of all His saints. A ‘publican’ became an Apostle. But Christ found it incredibly hard to move to penitence those who regarded themselves as righteous and despised others. For, as He says with terrible irony, “they have already received their reward.” Being outwardly respectable and virtuous, they get praise for this, while in reality they have been harbouring covetousness, greed, and deceit.

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There is a passage in the ninth chapter of St. John which brings this out plainly. Jesus is in Jerusalem.

“And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also?

“Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; *therefore your sin remaineth*” (John 9. 39-41).

The sin remained because in their blindness and self-conceit they were altogether unconscious of it.

On the other hand, for those who had deeply sinned, but like the publican in the parable had prayed from the depth of the heart, “God, be merciful to me a sinner,” there was the cleansing power of the Love of God ever there, ready to restore them to the joy of His presence.

“*Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.*”

At first sight this blessing may appear to be easier than others to attain; for there is a natural tendency among us to praise those who get on well with other people and are not quarrelsome; and this is supposed to be of the essence of ‘peacemaking.’

But in reality such easy-going natures may be just the opposite of those that truly make peace; for they are inclined to slur over deep-seated evil in order to create a superficial appearance of harmony and goodwill. No, it is really one of the hardest things in the world to be a true peacemaker; just as it is one of the most fatal things to go on “crying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer. 6. 14 and 8. 11). A mere patch-work peace will only result in the evil breaking out afresh in a more virulent form than before.

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For this reason, perhaps, Christ places the peacemakers side by side with the persecuted. For those who "seek peace and ensue it" find out that if the work is to be followed out to the end it must inevitably involve great suffering (1 Pet. 3. 11).

We must first of all bear the burden on our hearts of that which has caused offence between those who are thus at enmity with one another. Then, further, we must remain absolutely fair to both sides. While doing so we are likely to be regarded as unfair; and we may have to bear with patience this reproach. Then the change of heart that is needed if a true peace is to be won at last can only come about through the power of love and prayer.

If we keep in mind what has been already said about the earlier Beatitudes, we shall be able to understand how the peacemaker must carry all these earlier blessings with him. He must be utterly humble and conscious of his own failings; he must be ready to stand rebuffs like the meek; he must hunger and thirst after righteousness; he must be pure in heart; he must be full of divine compassion; he must be ready joyfully to suffer persecution. To put the whole matter in a single word, the peacemaker must be Christ-like.

St. James, in his epistle remembering his Lord and Master, gives the character of the Christian. He contrasts the worldly wisdom, which creates "strife and confusion and every evil work," with the heavenly wisdom which is of God. "The wisdom," he writes, "that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3. 17-18).

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For those who are humbly seeking to be true peacemakers, and are waiting upon God to give them the strength they need, we have this gracious promise: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (Isaiah 52.7). And St. Paul has this same verse from Isaiah evidently in his mind when he describes the Christian warrior, going out to do battle against the hosts of darkness, as "having on the breastplate of righteousness," and his "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6. 15).

*"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

The character which Christ has thus set forward before our eyes in the Beatitudes as truly blessed stands out uncompromisingly for purity, love, and truth in a world given over to violence and brute force. From first to last, in His own life, He repudiated violence in all its forms, and would not accept from the powers of evil all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them by lowering, however slightly, His moral standard.

In this His last blessing, which He repeats later in a more personal form, He reveals to those who follow Him along this road that if they remained steadfast in their allegiance to Him they would have to be ready to suffer. He goes on to tell them that they would be reviled and hated and slandered, but that they must regard these things as the cause, not of lament, but of exceeding joy; for they are the outward and visible signs of the inward grace in their hearts which leads them nearer to God.

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I think it may be said with truth that no warning was given to His disciples by Jesus so repeatedly and so plainly as this. Towards the end of His ministry He seemed to anticipate what His own fate would be, and He claimed from them a suffering similar to His own. At one of the most critical moments of all, when Peter had just acknowledged Him to be the Christ, He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16. 24-25).

Even though at first they did not fully understand the meaning of His words, and were not ready when the final crisis came, yet in after years they stood firm and one after another gave up their lives for Christ's sake. The passage in the first Epistle of Peter may be here quoted in full as a record of the attitude of the early Christian Church towards suffering and persecution

"For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience towards God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness. By whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but

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are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter 2. 19-25).

It will be seen, from this long quotation, how nearly the words of this Epistle correspond to the words of our Lord Himself:

*"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you* (Matt. 5. 11-12).

## Chapter V SALT AND LIGHT



(1)

*“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bowl, but on a lamp-stand; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5. 13-16).*

THE character which Christ has described in all its many-sided fullness as ‘blessed’ must not be hidden away out of sight, for that is not its purpose. It is no ‘cloistered virtue’ that Christ demands of these disciples whom He has chosen as ministers of the good news of God’s kingdom. Their lives must be open to all men, active, and beneficent; for the aim before them is nothing less than the whole world’s redemption from the power of evil.

Salt that has not lost its savour at once pervades the food or fluid with which it is mingled. The lamp, which is not obscured by a dark cover placed over it, shines out all over the room where it is set on a stand. A city set on a hill cannot be hid, but is seen by every traveller as a landmark from afar. In the same manner

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those who have Christ's 'hall-mark' of character inscribed upon them must fearlessly and openly mingle with the world of men. They, like their Lord and Master, are to be the light of the world. They must therefore seek out the dark surroundings where their healing work of love and compassion has to be carried out. They must be ready to go into them with the divine light of purity in their hearts. Whenever they are in the midst of evil, men must feel the contrast of their goodness.

While doing these works of mercy they must take no credit for themselves, but give all the glory to God the Giver. When men see their good works done in Christ's name, they must be taught to glorify the Father in heaven, from whom every good and perfect gift proceeds (see Jas. 1. 17).

(2)

When Christ's words about the 'salt' and the 'light' and the 'city set on a hill' are seen in this setting, His purpose is at once made clear. No touch of self-seeking can remain. The Good Life is to be lived for others. The characters of the disciples are being built up for a direct purpose—for the healing and redemption of others. They are to have the *supreme* blessing of being united with Christ Himself in bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God to all mankind. Freely they have received, they must freely give (Matt. 10. 8).

To Christ Himself had come the direct call which had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the

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captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4. 18-19). Christ's purpose in choosing them was that He might send them forth with this end in view. They were to carry on His own work of love and compassion. That is why they were called His Apostles (see Mark 3. 14).

Jesus had prepared Himself during all those silent years when He worked as a carpenter in the obscure village of Nazareth among those who were often hostile to Him (Luke 4. 28). The call had come to Him at the River Jordan when He had received John's baptism and the voice from heaven had appointed Him to His own life work. Now He calls, in turn, these His disciples, in the same manner, and prepares them for the same work (Luke 10. 3; Matt. 10, 16).

(3).

There are many questions which arise in our own minds when we face Christ's absolute standard of purity, truth, and love, which He thus set before His disciples and claimed their allegiance. Probably the first reaction with most of us, especially as we grow older and know our own weakness, is to shrink back from His demand as impossibly high and exalted. If the salt in us is to be so penetrating, if the light in us is to shine so brightly, we feel that with our own compromises and hesitations we have failed to reach His requirement. We dare not undertake His full and open service. We shun the publicity of such an open profession as He demands from us. We dread the sting of His words, 'Ye hypocrites,' if we make profession without practice. In this way, however greatly we are

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attracted by the character which He draws in such bold outlines, we become sadly conscious that it is far beyond us.

“Why should we be required,” ordinary men and women will ask, “to tune our lives up to so high a pitch? Will not the string of the instrument break? Why should we not be honest with ourselves and enjoy the good things which God has given us, with thankfulness to God the Giver, and not make any pretence of reaching a higher standard? We shall then run no risk of being numbered among the hypocrites whom Christ so rightly condemns. It may be the special gift of a few aspiring souls like St. Bernard, St. Francis, and others to be saints and suffer incredible hardships with meekness and humility, but that kind of thing is not in our line. The great majority of us never could be saints of that kind. Why should we? God did not make us that way. We are just decent men and women living in the place where God has put us and endeavouring to keep up there a moral standard neither too high nor too low. If we may declare our frank opinion, we don’t like these impossibly high standards, and rather suspect them. Human nature is not built that way. These ideals are all very fine in theory, and may be held in very exceptional cases, but they usually break down in practice. Then there comes a crash and a fall, and in the end the last state is worse than the first.”

I have recounted at some length what has been often said to me by those who have read such words as “Love your enemies,” etc., and have shrunk back from them as extreme. Possibly a secret self-satisfaction and a false humility creep into our minds along with such a reaction against the high ideal. I remem-

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ber Charles Gore with a group of undergraduates at Cambridge, seated round a fire, as he told a favourite story of his about a typical Englishman who thanked God that he was a publican. He was not religious like that man over there. He never made any profession of piety. *He* never pretended to be extra good. He never went to church like So-and-so, etc. Gore ended the story by saying that we must beware of the “pharisaism of the publican”!

Yet Charles Gore would have been the first to acknowledge that there is much good in these decent non-religious folk who never make any profession of religion, but at the same time would never dream of doing a mean action if they could possibly avoid it. Certainly he would never minimise for an instant their great value in society in helping to keep up what they themselves would call a decent standard. The English word ‘gentleman’ which is so peculiarly hard to define and yet means so much, owes a great deal to these very people. All this would be taken for granted.

But the tragedy of such ‘goodness’ lies in this, that when the average morality declines, it inevitably declines with it; for it continually takes colour from its surroundings; it does not rise above them. The eighteenth century, before the Wesleyan movement, is a typical instance of this. The salt had lost its savour. Only when Wesley came, with an incredibly higher standard of devotion, did the *average* moral standard begin to rise again. J. R. Green, the historian, has pointed this out in unmistakable terms. The same might be said about the moral standards in Western Europe before St. Francis of Assisi came and raised the whole spiritual level of the West.

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Christianity itself only succeeded, amid the appalling corruption of morals in the Roman Empire, on account of its absolute standards, which no Roman Emperor could bend or break.

Another aspect of the same subject, leading to the same conclusion, is as follows: When some awful crisis arrives and evil comes to the full—as, for instance, in Europe during the World War, the ordinary conventions of our moral life give way one by one. They break down. They are not able to withstand the strain that is put upon them. This is what came to pass at the end of the war and in the disastrous 'peace' which followed. Brute force and selfishness then gain the ascendant. Truth and honour, mercy and goodness, are at a discount. Hate and fear, arrogance and terror, come up to the surface. Such things as the economic blockade of Germany's starving women and children in order to enforce abject surrender are encouraged by people who at other times would have behaved with kindly generosity. Half the woes of modern Europe are due to the lowering of that 'decent standard' on the part of the victorious Allied Powers after the Armistice. This would probably be granted on every hand at the present time. The worst tragedy of all was this, that the Christian Church in the West, except among very small bodies like the Quakers, failed to set up any higher standard than other people.

(4)

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave repeated warnings to His disciples concerning the immense strength of these forces of evil in the world which would have to be met and conquered. It was just because His

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pure eyes saw these so clearly that He did not underestimate them for a moment. He gave us the parable about the man who intends to build a tower and sits down first to count the cost, and of the king who has to meet a hostile army, and makes quite certain that his own army is strong enough before he encounters the enemy. Mere half-hearted and compromising virtues (He would tell us) are of no avail in such a struggle with the powers of evil.

In His final words before His own Passion, He saw mustered, as it were, for the last great struggle, the whole world in conflict. "Nation," he said, "shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights shall there be and great signs from heaven. But before all these things, they shall lay their hands on you and persecute you. . . . And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Luke 21. 10, etc.).

No one could have put the dark warning more clearly than that! No one could have claimed an allegiance more whole-hearted than that! Then follows one of the greatest of all His sayings:

"In your fortitude ye shall win your souls."

Experience has shown us clearly, even in our own lifetime, what incredible sacrifices have to be made when evil is so strong in the world. The last ounce, as it were, of moral and spiritual endurance has to be called upon in such a period. The weakness of conventional standards and conventional morality then becomes apparent. Heroic action is needed, and human life itself must be lived on an heroic scale if

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a fair civilisation, with all its frail beauty, is to survive.

When humanity, which has been reared in a Christian atmosphere and has flourished among men and women of good-will, is confronted by such times as these, it would not at all avail to leave the picked and chosen few to stand alone against impending disaster while the rest go on as before, acting in a careless manner, "eating and drinking and giving in marriage" (see Luke 17. 27). The final problem of society is to raise the mass; and though the movement to do so may start like leaven from a few, it must do much more than that if permanent results are to be reached. The leaven, small as it is at the start when it is put into the mass of dough, must go on acting with fermenting force through the dough if the bread is to be properly made.

(5)

We come here to one of the ultimate questions with regard to Christ's teaching, which will meet us over and over again. Are His words addressed to an inner circle of followers only, or to all mankind? Are there, in reality, two standards put forward by Him, the higher only possible for those who abandon the world and live in seclusion from its most binding ties, the lower to be reached by those who remain in the world and face all the hard, practical problems of everyday life? To put the same question in another form, Is the high standard of the Sermon on the Mount only for those who would be 'perfect' and are ready to abandon the world-order, marriage, home, citizenship, and social ties? Or is it meant for people who are living in the world-order as it exists at present? Is that world-

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order itself the sphere in which this character of the Sermon on the Mount is to find its fulfilment?

There are certain sayings of our Lord, such as "If thou wouldest be perfect, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor" (Matt. 19. 21), which, taken in isolation and apart from the context, might appear to imply such a double standard of morality, and we shall come across this difficulty of interpretation more than once, later on, in the Sermon itself. But to regard Jesus Himself, who lived His life in the midst of the world-order, who was Himself called the "friend of publicans and sinners" and "came eating and drinking" (Matt. 11. 19), as setting up a double standard in His own society of followers seems to me to go clean contrary to the great body of evidence which we have before us, both about His manner of life and that of His first disciples. The crucial test would, perhaps, be that of 'marriage,' which binds man more than anything else to the social order. It is true that He admitted exceptions on the part of those who have "made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake," but the very word 'eunuch' that he uses expresses a form of mutilation; and He in no sense gives this celibate life a higher place than the married life, which He regards as ordained by God Himself "at the beginning." This is an entirely different picture of the celibate life from that which is offered by those who regard it as spiritually superior to marriage.

One further striking historical fact is this, that none of the Apostles ever attempted to set up a double standard of this kind in the earliest days of the Church, when the radiance of the Christian Faith was so strong and bright. The first preachers of the good news of

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the Kingdom took men and women, often of the lowest type, freed men and slaves, just as they were, and by the power of the Holy Spirit transformed them in their own surroundings, making saints out of quite ordinary people.

It is true that later on in the Christian Church, both in the East and West, the ideal of the monastic life was cherished, and it has also in certain epochs borne precious fruit. There has been a place for it in abnormal times again and again during the Christian era, but it can hardly be said to represent the main current of the Christian tradition, as, for instance, the monastic life does in Buddhism. The names of those who have been acknowledged as saints and martyrs and confessors by the universal Church have been in no way limited to monks and nuns who have chosen celibacy as their own part in the world-order. Christ, who gave His earliest blessing at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee and made little children, whom He took in His arms and blessed, the great example of the Kingdom of Heaven, sets up His standard of perfection among the married, who live the family life, and not merely among those who have cut themselves loose from all household ties.

The Gospel of Christ, with its emphasis on world-renunciation, is yet in its essence world-affirming. In Christ's parables nature in all its beauty is the Sacrament of the Eternal. Human life itself is sacramental. When we pray that God's name may be hallowed, and His Kingdom come *on earth*, we are not abandoning this world in which we live to the dark forces, but rather redeeming it from them. For this cause the Apostle Paul, in the true spirit of Jesus, speaks of the earnest expectation of all created life as waiting for

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the manifestation of the sons of God. He goes on to tell us that the whole creation yearns along with us for its final redemption when its travail pains are over and its new birth is accomplished. All this is 'world-affirmation' of the highest kind.

Having faced some of these difficult questions, let me sum up and explain once more in a much simpler manner what I have been trying to put forward with regard to the Beatitudes and their sequel.

We have seen that the central themes of all Christ's teaching are that God is our Father and that we are the dwellers in His Kingdom. We must therefore, if His blessing is to be ours, seek to attain to an inner character which shall enable us truly to love God as His own dear children and live in love and peace with all mankind. We must love one another with a pure heart fervently. That love must be humble and tender and strong and pure and ready to suffer. Only thus is our true life in this world, as God's children, made possible. Only thus can we acknowledge His kingship and hallow His name.

Thus we begin to understand how, in accordance with his eternal purpose, the foundation of our character has to be truly laid in entire dependence upon God, as a child depends upon his father, and in readiness at the same time to lay every thought of self aside in lowly service for our fellow-men.

But this love itself must not be falsely weak and yielding where truth itself is at stake. It must have strength and purity; it must hunger and thirst after righteousness and be single and pure in heart. Also it must be ready to suffer, and its power of sacrifice must be unbounded. It must be full of compassion and forgiveness; eager to make peace by being ready to carry

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the burden of others as its own; rejoicing, even when reviled and persecuted, if only truth and love may at last prevail.

With such a character in God's Kingdom, under His rule and sovereignty, His will may truly be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Apart from that character there is no possibility of a kingdom of heaven on earth.

There is one more closing thought which I have never seen as yet worked out in full. The 'Hymn of Love,' which St. Paul has given us, is in complete harmony with this perfect character described by our Lord in the Beatitudes. The harmony is all the more remarkable because it is so unconscious.

The central themes of St. Paul's 'Hymn of Love' are humility, truth, and sacrifice for others. By a true instinct it would seem as if the very order of the Beatitudes is kept.

The Hymn begins with all the different lights and shades of humility. Love is "long-suffering and kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked."

Then, in the very centre, is the great passion for righteousness, purity, and truth. "Love thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth."

Last of all, there is the willingness to suffer to the very end for others. "Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; love never faileth."

If we remember how our Lord's blessings began with the humble, contrite, and meek spirit; how the centre was this passion for righteousness and purity of heart; how the conclusion was a willingness to suffer

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for others to the uttermost and to rejoice in doing so, it will be seen that the love which St. Paul claims to be essential for the building up of the Body of Christ is of the same quality as this perfect character of goodness which Christ calls 'blessed.'

The Body of Christ, the Household of God, the Kingdom of Heaven—all these are concrete images of the one supreme Reality for which prophets and saints laid down their lives as they looked forward to see it from afar. They foreshadow and typify a restored humanity redeemed from evil and made one with God in Love.

## Chapter VI THE OLD AND THE NEW



*“Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”*

*“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Matt. 5. 17 and 20).

We have already seen how the Old Testament itself looked forward to the New; how the outward Law with its commandments and prohibitions was to give place to the inward law of righteousness written in the heart.\*

The great passage where this is foretold is so important that it may be well to repeat it. Jeremiah writes, “This is the Covenant [Testament] that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer. 31. 33).

Christ takes up this dim foreshadowing of the ancient scriptures as the main subject of all that follows in this part of His Sermon. Just as He took the word from Isaiah, on another occasion, where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor,” and said to His fellow-townsmen in Naz-

\* See Chapter III, p. 66.

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reth, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," so now, concerning the whole Law and the Prophets, He says, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

How was He to fulfil? Surely by this very process of making what was an outward commandment (such as "Thou shalt not kill") an inward law of the heart—a law so profound that not only no thought of killing should enter the heart, but also no thought of harm of any kind; no hatred, no dislike even. Nay, further, the inward process should go on far beyond this from the negative to the positive attitude, until indifference should be changed into love. Thus, in the end, would be seen a change brought about so great that the Apostle Paul, not many years later, could write the famous passage in the Epistle to the Romans, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13. 8-10).

In the same way the 'righteousness' which the Scribes and Pharisees demanded from the common people was all on the surface. They were content if the outward observance of the Law was strictly maintained, wherein were included the regulations of the Sabbath, the prohibitions in food and drink, the tithing of all produce, the observance of purifications and fasts, and the repetition of certain daily prayers. Much even of this might be made spiritual if it were done from the heart and led men nearer to God. Indeed, in

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this spirit some of the noblest of the Psalms were written, such as Psalm 119, which contains such verses as:

“Lord, what love have I unto thy Law;  
All the day long is my study in it.”

And again:

“Thy testimonies are wonderful;  
Therefore doth my soul keep them.”

(Ps. 119. 129.)

But the same Law became a burden too heavy to bear when the imposition of innumerable petty rules about eating and drinking and the “washing of cups and brazen vessels” (Mark 7. 4) and the “tithing of mint and anise and cummin” took the place of that obedience to the Divine will in the greater matters of mercy, truth, and justice (Matt. 23. 23).

The revolt against these minute observances, which weighed down the soul of man and turned him into a machine, might take different forms. On the one hand, it might lead by way of revolt to a complete laxity, both outward and inward, which threw off restraint altogether. With such a revolt Jesus had nothing in common. On the other hand, it might send men back to the principle behind the observance, the spirit behind the letter. If this took place, the right way of recovery had been taken; the soul of religion had been saved; fulfilment rather than destruction had already begun to take place.

But this would mean an infinitely higher ‘righteousness’ than any mere outward fulfilment of the letter of the Law. It would involve a much more serious moral effort. Prayer, fasting, the giving of tithes, would

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then be spiritual, not mechanical; from the heart, not according to the letter; an inward joy in communion with a compassionate and merciful God, not a sullen round of hard duty done under the eye of a jealous God who deals out punishment and vengeance.

It was the danger of laxity which Christ guarded against by saying that every jot and tittle of the Law should be fulfilled. In the Hebrew alphabet, as it was then written, there were very small distinctions between certain letters, and the two words 'jot' and 'tittle' have now become proverbial for such minute differences. What is meant by Jesus is that He will not make God's Law of less account, even in the smallest degree; rather, He will make it of more account. He will not make it easier to observe; rather, He will make it in one sense harder. For to keep the spirit of a great commandment of God is always harder than to keep the letter. Yet even though it is more difficult, the *joy* of keeping the spirit will be so great that any consideration of hardship will be absent. For the spirit of man is ever ready to respond to the highest ideal, wherever it acts with freedom and not under compulsion.

Thus Jesus, having laid down once for all this supreme principle that the higher righteousness shall be inward from the heart, takes some of God's elemental laws and shows how much deeper they go than any mere superficial observance.

*"Ye have heard how it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of being sentenced: But I say unto you, That he who is angry with his brother is in danger of being sentenced: and he who speaks contemptu-*

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*ously against his brother is in danger of a still heavier sentence: and he who curses his brother is in danger of the Gehenna of fire" (Matt. 5. 21-22).*

Here, with regard to one's fellow-men, Christ raises the standard of His own requirement by one step after another until the whole of the commandment is transformed. The inward thoughts of the heart have to be checked, not merely the outward act of physical injury.

Anger against a brother, for instance, may lead to anger in return. It may thus wound him more fatally than a blow with a dagger from outside; for it may, by the stab of wrath, kill his soul. Anger, therefore, which is harboured in the heart, may take on a murderous aspect and bring one in danger of condemnation. It should be noted that in the best Greek manuscripts the three words "without a cause" are omitted. They weaken the passage in its tremendous simplicity.

Contempt (that is what the Hebrew word 'Raca' implies) may be even more deadly than the sin of wrath: it cuts and wounds more deeply, and its effect is even more lasting than hot anger, which cools quickly. It is more deliberate and cruel. Therefore the stab of contempt meets with still greater condemnation from Jesus.

But the worst forms of murder are hatred and malice, which end in slander and the invoking of a curse upon one's brother. The Hebrew word here, which means literally 'Thou godless one,' implies a curse. It also implies slanderous hate. This sin of the soul, says Jesus, is the most deadly of all, and brings with it the greatest condemnation.

In the Old Bible version it is not easy to note these various degrees of penalty which murderous thoughts in the soul may involve. In the Greek, however, which

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follows closely the original Aramaic, there are clearly three degrees, mentioned under the figure of three forms of punishment in Palestine at that time. The first which the sin of anger may bring with it is the sentence of the lesser court. The second, which threatens the sin of contempt, is the higher court; here the death sentence may be passed. The third degree of sin (hating and slandering one's brother) may involve the most terrible punishment of all, whereby the worst criminals were not allowed any burial by their relatives, but were thrown after death into the Valley of Gehinnom, outside Jerusalem, where all kinds of filth and refuse were continually being burnt.

We may compare for this last dread judgment the words of St. John's first epistle, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3. 15).

In order to make still more clear this very difficult passage, let me try to make a paraphrase of our Lord's words as follows:

"In My Father's kingdom," He would tell us, "sins even of thought must be excluded, because thought leads on to action. Thus the sin of anger may become as evil in its consequences as the sin of actual murder. It may go far to kill the soul; and therefore God's sentence upon it is very severe. The sin of contempt is even worse and deserves an even more severe judgment. The sin of hate and slander and malice is worst of all. No punishment can be too grave for that. Those who are My disciples, and wish to dwell in My Father's kingdom, must keep out of their hearts every thought that contains anger, contempt, malice, or hatred, for all such thoughts are murderous."

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*“Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing”* (Matt. 5. 23-26).

The extreme danger of harbouring any thoughts in the heart except those of love and truth is here emphasised by our Lord in a familiar picture of village life which would have at once appealed to His audience on the hillside in Galilee. There are few things that the ordinary peasant fears more than to be involved in a lawsuit, in which before he gets out of the clutches of the law his whole livelihood may be confiscated. The terrible uncertainties of the law, the immense waste of the legal process, the danger of sinking deeper and deeper into the bottomless pit of litigation—all these things affright the villager and make him anxious to come to terms quickly.

Jesus takes this well-known dread, which was common to most of His audience, in order to deal drastically with the beginnings of anger in the heart, which may lead on step by step to envy, hatred, and malice and all uncharitableness and drag a person down deeper and deeper into the mire of sin. Let me try to paraphrase again:

“What do you always try to do,” Jesus asks in His homely way, “whenever you hear that someone is going to bring the law on you? Don’t you make every

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effort to stop the danger before it gets further? Well, then, why don't you do the same thing when you find out that a quarrel is beginning between you and your brother which is certain to become more aggressive if it is allowed to go any further? Why don't you hasten to do all you can, at the very first moment, to make things right?"

In the picture which Jesus thus draws in rapid strokes He represents the adversary (the one who prosecutes) delivering the accused peasant to the magistrate, and the magistrate delivering him over to the jailer, so that in the end he is cast into prison. Even so, He says, unless the beginnings of anger or malice are stopped at their source, the evil process goes on; the quarrel gets worse and worse.

There is one very simple rule of conduct that naturally follows if our Lord's advice is taken. The moment that you know that in some way you have given offence, go at once alone to the one who is offended, and, if you find that you have done anything to hurt him, ask forgiveness. Even the most sacred duty must be laid aside: "First to be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift."

If, on the other hand, you yourself feel that a wrong has been done to you, do not nurse the wrong by keeping silent about it, but go at once, before resentment arises, and frankly tell the person who has hurt you how you feel the injury.

"If thy brother shall trespass against thee," says Jesus, "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matt. 18. 15).

*"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time,*

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*Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee" (Matt. 5. 27-29).*

Here, once more, the inwardness of Christ's teaching is plainly visible. He had given in the centre of the Beatitudes His blessing to the "pure in heart," and we have seen, also, how He explained to the disciples that "out of the heart of men proceed adulteries" (Mark 7, 21). He now carries this teaching to its extreme length when He says in so many words that the lascivious look, secretly harboured and indulged in within the soul, shows that the man "has already committed adultery in his heart." The evil lies, as the Greek text shows quite clearly, in harbouring and dwelling upon the evil and impure thing. It may help us most if we turn to Bishop Gore at this point, whose words seem to me to sum up with great care and precision what our Lord warns us against.

"The man," he writes, "whom our Lord is here considering must be supposed to have the deliberate intention to sin; he looks on the woman in order to excite his lust; he is only restrained from action (if it be so) by lack of opportunity or fear of consequences; in his will and intention he has already committed the act. Our Lord then says that to will to sin and deliberately to stimulate sin in oneself has in His sight all the guilt of sin, even though circumstances may restrain one from the actual commission of it."\*

To have such a lofty standard put before us abases us and yet uplifts us at the same time. No evil is so

\* Gore's "Sermon on the Mount," Chapter iv, p. 68 (published by John Murray, London).

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insidious as this; and none, perhaps, does greater moral harm if indulged in to the fullest extent. We who are Christians may be thankful that we have a Faith that checks us at the very start and will not allow our thoughts to remain unguarded even for a single instant.

Jesus goes on to tell us, with regard to this evil, to cut off the occasions of sinning. Here, again, He gives us the extreme picture of a man cutting off His right hand or plucking out his right eye rather than allow the evil to increase and defile the whole body. While this phrase cannot possibly be taken literally, and was not thus intended by our Lord, it does imply, and it is meant to imply, a self-discipline of the severest type, with a view to curbing the sex passion where it has gone wrong and is working mischief.

The body, in which sex is one of the strongest instincts, has been given to us by God in order to exercise the divine purpose of fatherhood and motherhood. It is never to be regarded as evil. To do so is to create a dualism between body and spirit which to the Christian does not exist. The centre of evil is in the will, in the heart. But self-indulgence of the will and the senses may make the body for a time the master instead of the instrument. The secret passion indulged in may even gain the mastery over the will itself. St. Paul, before he had experienced the power of Christ to transform and recreate the will, cried out in his agony:

“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

When, however, his own will and heart had known to the full the transforming power and the constraining love of Christ, he was able to regain the mastery over the body and its members, its passions and its

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lusts, and become a pure-hearted man again, even though the scars of a fierce struggle remained. Yet we can always feel the difference between the disciple and the Master when these things are mentioned. With St. Paul there seems always a burning touch of memory of past defeats. He has been “saved; but so as by fire” (1 Cor. 3. 15).

*“It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery”* (Matt. 5. 31-32).

We come here in our Lord’s Sermon to a passage where there has been very much dispute with regard to its correct interpretation. The dispute lies in the extent to which Christ admits any exceptional ground for divorce. With regard to marriage itself, its indissolubility is taken for granted. Nothing can be clearer or stronger than the words of Jesus quoted later in St. Matthew and in St. Mark also.

“Have ye not read,” He asks, “that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt. 19. 4-6).

This absolute sanctity of marriage, which separates it off from being merely a family arrangement or a social compact, is the Christian ideal. There is a sacredness and reverence in Jesus’ word about marriage which shows that in His mind the bodily

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union of man and woman can be raised sacramentally to that union of spirits which brings both husband and wife ever nearer to the divine Love which is the eternal nature of God Himself. The fatherhood and motherhood, wherein marriage is made complete, is equally sacred with Jesus. The very name 'Father,' which He uses for God, reveals this. There is also not a word in all His teaching which would tend towards any disparagement of marriage in comparison with the celibate state. On the contrary, as we have already seen, celibacy is looked upon as a deprivation, only to be considered for "the Kingdom of Heaven's sake" (Matt. 19. 12). On the whole, the Christian Church, both in the East and West, has upheld this supreme sanctity of marriage as a divine ordinance.

The difficulty comes with regard to the words "save in the case of unchastity." Does this include things that are as defiling to the soul as unchastity itself, such, for instance, as some sadist hatred within the married life which shows itself continually in brutal and even criminal acts? I have only mentioned one possible further exception, but if the central principle underlying all Christ's commandments is this, that we must take the spirit of His teaching rather than the letter, then we cannot, as far as I am able to judge, regard Him as making this one permission here without allowing for other cases also that would come under the same broad heading. Life is so infinite in its complexity that it is just because Christ was not in any sense a legalist, but obeyed the free motions of the spirit and encouraged His disciples to do the same, that His teaching is never out of date.

For many years I was convinced by Bishop Gore's argument, where he wrote, "Christ who refused to

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legislate on so many subjects legislated on this; and the simple question arises, whether we prefer the authority of Christ to any other authority whatever." But we have the simple fact of history that the Western Church itself decided in this very matter not even to allow this saving clause "except in the case of unchastity," which, according to St. Matthew, Christ had actually admitted. It took what it believed to be the whole spirit of Christ's teaching rather than admit the exception on this point that is given in St. Matthew's Gospel. It would seem to me, therefore, that there is no valid reason for saying that on this one subject Christ 'legislated' and left no freedom whatever to His disciples.

This does not mean—as I have already pointed out—greater laxity or any mere accommodation to a worldly standard. Just the reverse. Christ's teaching is absolute here as elsewhere. Marriage is so sacred that its indissolubility ought to be taken for granted by every Christian who thinks of entering upon it. To undertake marriage lightly is utterly and entirely un-Christian. No one ought even to think of marriage except as an indissoluble bond. This is where the severity of the Christian standard ought to come in and the supreme gravity of the issue of marriage ought to be insisted on. But to force a pure and chaste woman or man to remain in a living hell upon earth for the rest of their lives, merely in order to fulfil a legal obligation, is surely not to act in the spirit of Christ—if I may dare to express with great diffidence my opinion on a subject which has become one of the burning questions of our own age.

If I have at all considered rightly in this commentary the teaching of Christ which is given in this Sermon,

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the fact that our Lord has stated clearly as an axiom of the Christian life the indissolubility of marriage remains quite unshaken by this further question as to what exceptions later ages may allow or may not allow. It would have been in keeping with His words on other great subjects if He had mentioned no exceptions whatever. Indeed, it may be that this was actually His own teaching and that the early Christian Church added of its own accord the words "except in the case of unchastity," rightly interpreting the mind of the Master for their own times.\* There are certain extremely difficult problems about the original text which seem almost to point to this conclusion, but they have not yet been cleared.

What may be pointed out is this, that St. Mark, which is the earliest Gospel, gives no saving clause at all. Since St. Matthew's Gospel was written later than St. Mark, many scholars hold that in these two places (Matt. 5. 32 and 19. 9) the words "save in the case of unchastity" have been added, whether on account of some "word of the Lord" in prophecy or by a general consent of those who ruled in the Church.

Christians are to be guided by the living Spirit of Christ down all the ages. This is the axiom of the Christian Faith. We cannot doubt, therefore, that He is still teaching us now as He taught those early Christians; for His promise abides that He will be with us all the days even unto the end of the age (Matt. 28. 30).

*"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but*

\* One such addition at the end of Matthew 6. 13 is a case in point, where in some manuscripts the doxology is added but not in others.

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*shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all*” (Matt. 5. 33-34).

One of the earlier commandments under the Law had said, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” Christ brings forward, under the head of this commandment, the whole question of truthfulness of speech.

The custom had already grown up of continually taking the name of God in everyday conversation in order to emphasise what was being said. The habit still remains all over the East, and it is well known in the West also. Its purpose is vehemently to assure anyone of the truth of what is being asserted. But this not only leads to great irreverence; it also serves to weaken the sense of the truthfulness of one’s spoken word on ordinary occasions. Christ tells us that we must be so pure in heart that our simple ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ will be quite sufficient without any oath being added. All further emphasis, He says, only leads to evil.

It may be asked whether the taking of an oath in a court of law is forbidden to Christians. This must be left to everyone’s conscience. Such an oath should not be *necessary* for a Christian; and it is surely a sign of something wrong when a simple ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ from a Christian is regarded as insufficient to guarantee the truth of the testimony given. If an affirmation is allowed in court instead of an oath, a follower of Christ should certainly prefer it.

Those who are used to law-courts and see every day the formality of taking the oath and kissing a very dirty copy of the Bible, which is often the only sacred book kept in court for that purpose, must eagerly

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desire, if they are true Christians, to hasten the time when such an abuse of holy things is altogether done away. One fact should be perfectly clear to anyone who thinks at all about the matter. He ought so to live and so to speak every day that no one should doubt for a moment that his word is as good as his bond.

There is one very interesting recollection of this passage in the last chapter of the general Epistle of St. James, which corroborates what I have written above. "But above all things, my brethren," says St. James, "swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (Jas. 5. 12).

There is also another saying of our Lord Himself about the 'idle word' which should always be kept in remembrance. "Out of the abundance of the heart," says Jesus, "the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12. 35-37).

The Christian standard, as all our Lord's teaching shows, begins with the inner thoughts of the heart; it proceeds to the spoken word; it goes on to the acted deed. In thought and word and deed we must reverence the truth.

Behind all that Jesus has been saying is a warning to us. In these and similar statements lies the sacredness of Truth itself. The 'honest and good heart,' the 'single eye,' the 'yea, yea,' represent the positive side

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of truth, which corresponds in our Lord's teaching with the condemnation of the 'idle word,' the 'evil eye,' the deceit and hypocrisy, on the negative side, where truth is lacking, and where the whole life becomes an acted lie.

## Chapter VII THE LAW OF LOVE



*“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away”* (Matt. 5. 38-42).

THERE are certain minor points which need to be cleared up before we pass on to the last verses of this same section of the Sermon. The following may be specially noticed:

(1) To be struck on the right cheek was regarded both as a challenge and an insult. According to the code of honour of those days it would require some immediate requital. In all probability it would be the beginning of a long dispute involving the family or tribe. We are to forestall any such ultimate disaster by going to the extreme length of loving forbearance. Even when openly insulted we are to bear no personal enmity and to avoid any thought of resentment. We are only to seek to “win our brother” (see Matt. 18. 15).

(2) The ‘cloak’ or upper garment was much more costly than the vest or shirt underneath. Jesus implies that if a small demand were made of us under some

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form of compulsion, such as a lawsuit, then, instead of resisting it, a much more valuable gift might be given freely, without any lawsuit at all, with a view to win the heart of the oppressor.

(3) The compulsion to 'go a mile' refers to a custom on the great high roads of the Roman Empire whereby an officer of Government was free to take forced labour from any locality in order to do his own official work. This custom has been familiar in India under the name of 'Begar,' and has only recently been abolished in British India. Even now it goes on unchecked in certain Indian States. It is naturally liable to gross abuses. Since payment for such labour was often wrongfully kept back by the employer, it was regarded with intense dislike and often shirked or repudiated as an act of tyranny. For anyone to accept this forced labour as a willing task, and also to offer to carry the burden still further, would be a quite unprecedented act that might be expected to touch the hardest heart.

(4) In these three illustrations our Lord is setting before us in the most startling manner possible the length to which His followers must be ready to go in generosity and goodwill. He is using the 'picture language' which all simple, country people like to hear in homely talk. For it can be taken away and remembered without any danger of becoming vague and indefinite. The extreme form renders it a perfect vehicle for transmission. It also sets the mind to work to discover beneath the picture the true inward meaning.

The old Law of Moses had been built up from the very first on the principle of exact requital for rich and poor alike. This was, in itself, a great step forward compared with laws which favoured a single class and allowed unlimited vengeance. Yet how barbarous it

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still remained! We have to read Exodus 21. 24, from which Christ quoted the *Lex talionis*, the law of re-quital, in order to see this clearly:

"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." (See also Lev. 24. 20 and Deut. 19, 21.)

When we read this sentence of the Old Testament and then pass on to the verse in the Sermon on the Mount, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5. 44), we seem to have passed into an entirely different world. For the Law of Love which Jesus promulgates in this chapter implies not merely a refusal to exact a just penalty for a serious injury received, but also an eagerness to overwhelm the wrongdoer with such true generosity that he may feel shame for the wrong done, and then of his own accord wish to make amends for it! The appeal is to that which is best in him against that which is worst.

We have to go a very long way in human history if we would trace right back the silent growth of this idea of returning good for evil. In the life of Gautama the Buddha it formed the supreme discovery which he made when he sought to break the chain of suffering wherewith human life had hitherto appeared to be inextricably bound. The wheel of that suffering, so it seemed to him as he meditated upon our common human destiny, only revolved the faster at each new act of retaliation. But if the opposite of retaliation was accomplished, and good was returned instead of evil, the wheel of suffering, at that point at least, began to revolve more slowly.

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This discovery represented one of the great moments in human history; and almost at the same time, in the west of Asia, the conception of the Suffering Servant of the Lord, who by his very suffering redeemed the sins of many, took shape in the mind of the Hebrew prophet:

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53. 1-5).

Not till more than five centuries later were both these great previsions perfectly combined in One who not only lived and taught His followers to return good for evil in its highest and purest form, but also “himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses,” and gave His life itself “as a ransom for many.”

It is to our Lord’s Passion in Gethsemane and on the Cross at Calvary that we must look for the complete fulfilment of all the old, imperfect strivings of humanity to rise above the brute nature up to the higher spiritual life where God and Man are one. The

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more we study that perfect example which He has set before us, its entire forgiveness, its patient suffering, its silent endurance without a word of bitterness, its physical and spiritual anguish, the more we understand the meaning of these words "resist not evil," "Love your enemies," "Pray for them that persecute you."

We shall come to our Lord's words "Love your enemies" later on. At this point we have to concentrate our whole attention on the method which Jesus tells us to adopt when we ourselves have been personally injured by someone against whom we may be inclined to retaliate and answer blow for blow. Human justice seems to demand some penalty being exacted. And yet our Lord tells us to do just the opposite: to offer no resistance even if he continue his persecution. In highly figurative language Jesus tells us to go to the extreme in showering generosity on the persecutor. We are to go to extravagant lengths in trying to win his love and change his heart. "If he compel you to carry his burden for one mile, carry it two miles instead"—i.e., until you have completely won his affection.

I have called this, inadequately, a method. It is far more than that, it is a spirit. The word 'method' implies a copying of detail in the picture—what we have come to call a 'technique.' But that is very far from the thought of Jesus. Indeed, the very illustrations which He gives make the literal copying of what He tells us so rare as to be almost impossible. There is, indeed, a well-known story of John Forman, the old missionary in Lahore, who actually received a fierce blow on his right cheek when he was preaching in the bazaar from someone who had read this verse. This

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gave him the one opportunity he had waited for of doing exactly what His Master told him. He turned with a smile his left cheek to the smiter, and won over the heart of his persecutor by doing so, who in the end became his disciple.

But such a literal following of Christ's commandment is so rare as to be almost unique. What is needed is to watch for those golden occasions of returning good for evil in the daily life which are in accord with the spirit of Christ's teaching, and then eagerly to seize them and act as He would wish us to act. There is probably no part of His teaching where the spirit of wisdom and understanding is more greatly needed and where mere literalism may be more harmful than beneficial. His own words, "Be ye wise as serpents and innocent as doves" are nowhere more apt than at this very point. Yet to rule His commands out of court as quixotic and impracticable because of their extreme difficulty in fulfilment is the last thing in the world to do with such burning words as these, which ought to kindle our souls into a living flame of love.

I may be pardoned for relating an incident which happened in the midst of what might be called 'rescue work' in one of the worst slums in London down at Walworth. Every Salvation Army officer could tell a similar story, and I only repeat it here because it gives a good illustration of the difference between the 'letter' and the 'spirit' of Christ's command.

One who had sunk to the lowest depths of intemperance came at midnight to the mission-house, and we took him in and made him a bed downstairs to sleep off his drink till the morning. He had come, as I found out afterwards, from a good family and had seen better days. We did all we could by sympathy and affection

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to win him and cure him from his evil habit. This went on for nearly a month while he lived with us. But the crash came, and he fell right back into his old drinking ways. We used to see him, a very pitiable sight, standing at the street corner outside the public house. But the moment he saw one of us coming towards him he would hurry away, and if we ever got a word with him asking him to come back he refused.

Then one day the silver vessels for the Communion of the sick, which had been given me as a present at my ordination, were found to be missing. This greatly troubled me, and I searched every pawnbroker's shop in the neighbourhood on the chance of finding them in pawn. In this way I recovered the small silver paten; but for some weeks the rest of the silver remained unfound. Then one night, after coming back very late from the men's club, just before I went to bed, I heard a heavy thud on the door outside. There on the doorstep was the same man, almost dead drunk, and I was about to take him in once more in order to put him up for the night when he put his hand in a ragged pocket and brought out the rest of the silver vessels.

At that moment I sought for guidance as to the best thing to be done. At last I decided to do a thing I had never done before—namely, to give him into custody. So I took him round to the police station and asked the head officer, whom I knew, to take care of him. Then I went to the court the next morning and asked for a light sentence. The magistrate, who heard the whole story, helped in every way possible and gave him a month's simple imprisonment, on my guarantee to look after him when he was released. He came back to live with us, and it was a pitiful sight to notice his dread of being left alone even for a moment for fear

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lest he should fall again. Some of the very best of our club members, who were total abstainers, helped us. He fell back once or twice, and at last became very ill. What we had suspected was told us by the doctor. His physical condition was a wreck, and rapid consumption had already set in. It became fairly certain that he could never recover.

We obtained his admission into the Brompton Hospital, and he lingered on for nearly two years, during which his whole character became changed. When I asked him one day if he would like to get well and go out of the hospital again, he looked at me almost with alarm and said to me, "No, sir. This has been the happiest time in my life for the last twenty years. Let me stay here till I die."

I asked him one day whether he thought I had done the right thing that night in taking him to the police station. He said to me, "Yes, sir; that was the turning-point of my life; for if you had taken me into the mission-house I should have gone straight back to the drink the very next morning. The craving was so strong with me that I couldn't have resisted."

I have told this incident, which happened nearly fifty years ago, in order to explain quite simply how the keeping of the *letter* of Christ's commandment has at times to be carefully avoided if we would seek to fulfil His spirit. The agony of the decision that night, when I had to determine against all my own inclinations to take him to the police station instead of putting him to bed in the room he had occupied before, still remains vivid in my memory, because I seemed at the moment to be acting against the literal words of Christ, and I puzzled over it all with great hesitation before I took that very drastic step. Yet afterwards

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I could see that it was the spirit of Christ's teaching which had really led me forward. It was this that mattered.

What I would venture to point out as a sequel to that story is this, that if I had attempted that night on the doorstep to take Christ's words too literally, I should have done more harm than good. It was through *the agony of thinking the problem out for myself*, on the principles which Christ had laid down, that the right solution came. The truest way to 'forgive,' up to the 'seventy times seven' that Christ had demanded, was really to put him under restraint and charge him with theft and then bear the burden of the punishment as far as I could along with him. Yet what a strange way of forgiveness!

Thomas, in the Gospel according to St. John, was a typical literalist, but again and again he received a most tender rebuke from our Lord on that very account. When St. Paul writes, "My brothers, do not be mentally children. As regards evil indeed be babes, but in intelligence be full-grown men" (1 Cor. 14. 20), he was surely speaking according to the mind of Christ. There are few things more necessary among Christians today than this robust and mature thinking. We have to love God with all our *mind* as well as with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength if we would keep the first Commandment.

Let me try now to sum up in a few words what I have been saying in this section, because it is one of the hardest lessons for some, who are most earnest Christians, to learn. The spirit that is behind the words and parables of Christ is always the thing that matters. As we have seen, we may go a very long way

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from the letter and yet keep His commandments best of all.

Not seldom in India I have had to answer an attack on the Christian Faith which was built up by the writer on the 'contradictions' in Christ's teaching. The argument thus used was a very foolish one, because life is never logical. Life itself is full of contradictions; and if our Lord's words had never been paradoxical they would never have reached down as deep as they did. Just in their paradoxes is their living character.

All the homely sayings of mankind, which have the wisdom of the ages stored up in them, are proverbial; that is to say, they represent only one great truth at a time. Yet how stupid it would be to charge the proverbial wisdom of the whole human race with being erroneous simply because there were found in it startling sayings which 'contradicted' one another!

To take a simple example, such a phrase as 'Delay is dangerous' may have at one time the best practical wisdom in it for our guidance, while at another time 'More haste, less speed,' or 'Look before you leap' may be the true wisdom needed. It is this infinite variety and complexity of human life which is the soul of individuality. It makes men into persons, not things. The constant following of literal commands becomes in time a mechanical habit, which the soldier may admire, but not the poet or the artist. Christ, in every word of this Sermon, is the great Poet of Humanity. He is the Artist giving us a vision of Beauty. To standardise His sayings is to rob them of their living power.

A humorous story may illustrate this, for it contains a wealth of wisdom behind the humour. Once I saw the answers given by the poet Tagore in one of those

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disconcerting autograph books which ask intimately personal questions. This one had the heading, "What is your favourite vice?" The poet had replied in his clear handwriting, "Inconsistency." The next question was, "What is your favourite virtue?" Tagore had written exactly the same word, "Inconsistency." The lady to whom the book belonged asked him to explain the meaning, and he replied, "You must find that out yourself; for only life can teach you. But please remember that I am a poet."

It has been necessary at this point to refer at some length to this subject of the "fallacy of literalism," because the words which our Lord uses in this portion of His Sermon, such as "Resist not evil," "Give to him that asketh," are evidently set before us in their absolute form in order to induce us to use our own judgment on each occasion, whenever we endeavour to put them into practice. As St. Paul says, we ought to be, "not mentally children, but in intelligence full-grown men" (1 Cor. 14. 20).

## Chapter VIII

### THE LAW OF LOVE

(continued)



*“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the Publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye to excess? do not even the Publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5. 43-48).*

I HAVE set down the whole of this passage because it is one of the most memorable in all literature, and it cannot be studied too often. It is to be taken as the climax of the theme already set forward by Jesus with the words “Resist not evil,” and it is intended to show that there are no limits to which Christian love may not go in its efforts to return good for evil. In its fullness and perfection it represents a new step forward in the history of mankind and a higher spiritual level than had ever been reached before. In certain respects it may be called the crowning word of the New Testament as contrasted with the Old.

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The general sense of this part of the Sermon is quite clear, but there are certain minor points of translation, etc., which need further comment in order to make details plain to the ordinary reader.

(1) The original meaning of 'neighbour' was that of fellow-countryman. In Leviticus it means always the fellow-Jew, who was within the same covenant. The 'enemy' was the foreigner. There is no actual text in the Old Testament giving the command to hate the 'enemy,' but after the Exile that hatred of the 'enemy' crept into the heart of religion itself as the Jewish people became more and more exclusive. As a consequence we have what have been called the imprecatory psalms, where such hatred is expressed in the most bitter terms which no Christian can recite without a pang of conscience. Leo Tolstoy was right in pointing out this original meaning of the word 'enemy' as the 'foreigner,' and declaring that Christ hereby did away with all narrow patriotisms and racialisms. At the same time the general interpretation which takes the word 'enemy' in a still wider sense is also correct. For the sentence that follows, "Do good to those that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you," has obviously the widest possible reference.

(2) The whole of this part of the Sermon has to be taken in close connection with the Beatitudes. It will be remembered that the meek were those who did not resist, but waited upon God for deliverance. The very same words, also, about men reviling and persecuting Christ's disciples are used in both places. We have already noticed how it is the character of those who are poor in spirit and meek and love righteousness and are persecuted which is blessed. They alone can

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rise to the height of this supreme love of God and be 'perfect' with His perfection.

(3) Rain in Palestine, which is a very small country on the edge of the desert, is a most precious gift, no less precious than sunshine itself. In Psalm 68 we read, "Thou sentest a gracious rain upon thine inheritance and refreshedst it when it was weary" (Ps. 68. 9).

(4) The 'publicans' are mentioned, not with any contempt, but simply as typical of those people who had frankly accepted a lower moral standard. Christ was called the "friend of publicans and sinners," so that He could not possibly have spoken of them with contempt.

(5) The daily greeting in the Near East is, "Peace be with you," to which the response is made, "May peace be also with you." This beautiful salutation remains up to the present day in Syria and is used by the followers of Islam and also by Christians in its Arabic form.

(6) "What do ye more than others?" The Greek word 'perisson' seems to have been taken up in the early Church to express that overwhelming experience of love, joy, and peace which came in full tide into men's hearts with the power of the Holy Spirit.\* It occurs very frequently in St. Paul's Epistles. Compare such phrases as "that your love may abound more and more" (Phil. 1. 9), and the benediction "Unto him who is able to do *exceeding abundantly* above all we can ask or think" (Eph. 3. 20), where a doubly superlative form of the same Greek word is used. Dr. L. P. Jacks has spoken of the 'radiance' of the Christian

\* Compare Romans 14. 17, "The Kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."

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Faith in that first age of the Church. That 'radiance' was this 'perisson.'

(7) Instead of "What reward have ye?" St. Luke has "What thank [or grace] have ye?" Both are obviously translations of the same Aramaic original. In St. Matthew's Gospel this word 'reward' must not be taken in any selfish sense. The heavenly Father's 'reward' (as we shall see later) is always a heavenly reward. It implies the greater realisation of His love and the greater knowledge of His presence (see Matt. 6. 6).

(8) The last sentence of this passage may be translated either "Ye shall be perfect" or "Be ye perfect." The parallel passage in St. Luke seems to show that the imperative "Be ye perfect" is more in accord with the original. It is also more in keeping with the Sermon on the Mount itself with its positive commands.

Let us now pass on from these minor details concerning the right translation of the text and seek to grasp the full general meaning of our Lord's words when He puts before us the highest standard that life can ever offer for our attainment—the love that extends even to those who are our enemies, who hate us and revile us and persecute us. It has been rightly said that His words on this subject, combined with His own example, can never grow old and also can never be surpassed. I remember quite well Sadhu Sundar Singh telling me, when he was at Kotgarh, what a profound impression this passage in the Sermon on the Mount had made upon him when he first read it over as a boy. Indeed, in India there are very few parts of the New Testament that are quoted more often than this passage. Its greatness lies not so much in the

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words themselves as in the One who spoke them. For this Speaker was the same Jesus who prayed to His Father while He was being nailed to the Cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Here was the true miracle of Love.

In order to bring home to the minds of His disciples that it is no common standard which He requires of us, Jesus contrasts His own demand of love with that which men and women usually claim from their friends and acquaintances. He points out that ordinary people are easily able to love those who love them in return, and to salute those who salute them. Human affection can be expected normally to rise to that standard; but this is not enough. His followers have to go further. "What do ye," He asks, "in excess?"

"How far," He would ask us, "do you go beyond the limit which ordinary people place on their affection towards others? How far is there any extravagance in your love?"

He means that His own demand is infinitely higher than that of the world around Him. He claims that His followers must love, not merely their friends, but far more—their enemies. They must love not merely those who will greet them with affection, but far more—they must love those even who will return hatred for their friendship. Can the Christian rise to such a height as that?

He *must* do so, Jesus would tell us, if he is to be a light in the world that cannot be hid, if he is to be like salt that has not lost its savour, if he is to be like a city set on a hill. His own love for us has already gone far in excess of anything we have ever dreamt of. Cannot we go to excess in our love for others? The

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extravagance of Christ's love for us calls for extravagance in our love for others in return. We sing:

"Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my life, my soul, my all."

But are we ready to make the sacrifice needed?

The woman in the Gospel story who brought the alabaster box of very precious ointment and broke it and poured it upon the feet of Jesus did truly perform just that kind of extravagant act at a critical moment when it was most needed, for Jesus was full of foreboding at the thought of His approaching Passion; and just at that moment she showed her supremely understanding love in this manner. That very extravagance of hers won His richest blessing. "She has done," He said, "a beautiful act."

By means of such incidents as these, which occur again and again in the Gospel story, Jesus explains to us that the true Christian must never be content merely with ordinary standards. He must always be ready to go still further beyond—to excess; yes, even to extravagance in his devotion. Only thus can the hardest heart be won back to goodness. Only in this manner can the victory over deep-seated evil ever be accomplished.

We seem to have here the very essence of the Christian Gospel, that one thing which distinguishes it from every other living religion in the world today. It always claims the highest—the extravagantly highest—from us. It can never be satisfied with merely the second-rate and the commonplace.

Nearly fifty years ago, when I had first gone up to Pembroke College, Cambridge, as a student, it was necessary for me to support myself, because we were

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a very large family at home and our parents were poor. Therefore the tutor of my college, the Rev. C. H. Prior, very kindly gave me an Indian Christian pupil to instruct in Greek. At that time I had just discovered in my Bible reading the full meaning of this wonderful text wherein Christ says, "What are you doing to excess?" While this was still fresh in my mind I wrote the text out in Greek as a question to put before myself every day—"What do ye to excess?" It remained on my study table as a reminder of the high standard of the Sermon on the Mount; and when I looked at it I used to ask myself the searching question, "Can I truly say that my own love for Christ has become the one main incentive of my life, causing me each day to go to the extreme limit in my devotion to Him alone? Does it make my love for others wider and deeper in turn? Have I gone to the extreme limit of love?"

I was quite full of this new thought when the Indian Christian student whom I was coaching came into my room and noticed the Greek text on my table. He begged me to explain it, and was deeply impressed by the explanation which I gave him. He asked me if he might take away the text in my own handwriting for his own use, and I willingly consented.

Strangely enough, many years after this had happened I was travelling on the same ship with an old college friend who had been at my own college. He had risen, since he left college, to be a Judge of the High Court in the Federated Malay States. He asked me if I remembered X, and I said at once, "Yes, I used to teach him Greek at Cambridge." He then informed me that he had met him quite recently and that he was getting on quite well in his profession.

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“Do you know,” he went on to say to me, “when I was with him recently I saw a Greek text on his table, which he told me you had given him when he was an undergraduate?” He had kept it before him on his desk all these years.

Immediately the whole scene came back to me and I remembered this text, “What do ye to excess?” (*Ti perisson poieite?*) I asked the Judge if that was the text he referred to. He told me that I had answered right, and said, further, that it had helped X all through his later life to keep up the Christian standard in his work and not to sink down to a lower level. It was a very great surprise and encouragement to me to know that this short sentence from the Sermon on the Mount had influenced my pupil so profoundly.

Whatever other religions may accomplish by accepting lower standards, which are more suited (as men would say) to the level of the masses, there is one thing quite certain: the religion which Christ taught us can never lower *its* standard. For if ever it compromised, even to a small degree, on these highest issues of life, it would lose the most distinctive and precious quality which has made it unique among all the religions of the world. Its motive power would thus be gone. The lamp that Christ brought to mankind would then be hidden under a cover. It would give no light to the world.

We go on now to consider together the main difficulty that has been raised by earnest Christian men and women in every age of the Church, and especially in our own times. The question is this, “Are we not really straining human nature too far when we ask it to do the impossible? Even if we agree that the

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standard set by Christ must go beyond that of ordinary people, is not the command to 'love our enemies' going too far? Do we not lose touch with reality, the actual facts of common life, when we seek thus to aim at and achieve the ideal? Would it not, therefore, be better to come down to a more practical level?"

This means that we shrink back from the tremendous test which Christ puts on our allegiance when He tells us, "For My sake go even to this excess of love, and be prepared to love even your enemies." Are we prepared to do this? That is the question.

It is difficult for me to give a direct answer on this point, because my own life has been singularly free from the worst kinds of enmity and hatred, and I have also known very little of real persecution. But I can speak with all humility of periods, however brief, during which the love of God has so flooded my inner spirit with its fullness that it has been made supremely clear to me that all mankind and all creation are embraced in that love, and that even the impossible becomes possible when that love and unity are present with such overwhelming power. These moments, as far as I can understand them, have not been purely emotional, though the imagination, which comes so close to the emotional side of our nature, has been illuminated to a singular degree. Rather they have been times when every exercise and sacrifice of the will appeared to be joyfully possible.

Let me, with very great diffidence, refer to two different kinds of spiritual experience, which may be a help and comfort to some who have to struggle far more than I have ever been called upon to do against forces of evil at their worst, and have found the utmost

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difficulty in attaining this larger vision about which I am now writing.

The former of these has more directly to do with communion with nature, and therefore is to be found outside as well as inside the Christian Church. A mood, I may call it by that name, has often come to me in the very early morning when the quiet around me is profound and the sunshine just begins to flood the air. In the stillness and solitude and beauty of the morning light there has been present a nearness and a closeness to the love of God so profound and deep that evil seems to vanish before it. At such a moment of vision I have joyfully repeated over to myself these well-known words of Jesus:

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” . . . “Be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Even that word “Be ye perfect” does not seem altogether beyond us in such glorious moments as these when we are wrapped around with the sunshine of God’s love. The complete oneness with our heavenly Father and His creation, which we thus realise, may be soon broken again. The harsh cruelties of everyday life may return. That, also, I have understood only too well. But to know, in the inmost heart, this harmony with the will of God, in all His goodness, even for a brief moment, brings with it an inner sense of reality which abides.

I have mentioned that in this sense mystical union

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with Nature in her exalted moods is not distinctively Christian. Indeed, it is met with very widely in the history of the mystics of all ages, and carries with it a universal note in East and West alike. I can well remember, for instance, Rabindranath Tagore telling me how one morning in Free School Lane, Calcutta, just as the sun was rising and the light was beginning to touch the trees, a flood of joy and love for God's wonderful creation came over him with such overwhelming power that he could feel, with every sensitive nerve of his being, a corresponding love for all created things in union with that Divine love; even what seemed ugly and distasteful before became enveloped in that joy and love. He told me how this went on for days.

Wordsworth in his own youth had something of that same open vision, and we find it in people so far apart as Jalaluddin Rumi Kabir and Jacob Boehme, to mention only a few names out of a multitude that no man can number. All this surely has its own place in that heavenly 'perfection' of which Jesus speaks, however transitory it may be in its effects.

It can rightly be argued, however, that all of us are not mystic, and even in our rare and inspired moments we do not get that sense of the infinite joy in creation which is akin to the love of God. I would at once concede this, though I would add that far more have it than we commonly imagine. Let me quote a very dear friend, Peter Green, of Manchester, who tells his own story. "Though," he writes, "I have been interested in mysticism, and a reader of the mystics, for many years, I do not think that my own approach to religion is always the mystic way. But just after the war I had one strange experience. From 1914 to 1918

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I was not able to get away for any holidays, but in 1919 I spent Monday to Saturday several times in a remote cottage in the Lune Valley, reading, writing, and going for long solitary walks. One afternoon I had been walking along a seemingly endless country lane, little more than a grassy cart-track between hedges. It rose steadily for some time till it reached a point where a gap in the hedges gave a view over a wide stretch of open country. I had been curiously restless and expectant, and I sat down on a heap of stones overgrown with wild geranium, feeling that something—I did not know what—was going to happen. And here I will quote from an account written and published, in the form of a story, soon after:

“ ‘Suddenly I know.’

“ ‘What did you know?’

“ ‘Everything. All there is to be known. The nature of reality and the meaning of life, and the secret that all the philosophers have desired to know since thought began. I can’t tell you, of course. I have heard “unspeakable words” which it is not lawful for a man to utter! But one thing I will say. I knew in that moment that all life is one. Not only the life of men, and animals, and insects, and plants. No, the life that runs in the sides of the hills and beats like a great heart in the ribs of the mountains.’ ”\*

There is, however, a second experience of a still deeper character which is uniquely Christian and gives us a much more permanent assurance and far stronger hope. At certain great moments in our Christian lives, such as those which follow the new birth itself at the time of conversion, or at some later

\* “Our Lord and Saviour,” (Longmans, 1928), pp. 47-48.

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renewal of the Holy Spirit with fullness of power, the love of Christ our Lord and Master, with its divine forgiveness, so enters like a flood-tide into our ordinary lives that it makes us long to do anything that is possible or impossible in sheer gratitude and devotion in order to show our own love in return. Then indeed we can pray as we never prayed before, and we can forgive our enemies, not only unto seven times, but unto seventy times seven. We can love them and all the world in His love.

I have written many times about that first new wonder in my own life, when I was nineteen years old, which shaped the whole of my future course and saved me from shipwreck. For there had come into my heart a forgiveness deep as the ocean, wide as the blue sky, unfathomable in its depths of divine love, and Christ has been the living Christ to me ever since, and all my deepest thoughts have sprung from Him. I began then to know the perfect love which casts out all fear, and it was this Divine Presence, this Spirit of redeeming Love, around and about and within me, that had made the real change in me that has gone on unto this day. Apart from Christ all this would have been impersonal and abstract, vanishing and impermanent. In Christ God Himself had become human and personal and real; His love had become human and personal also.

One thing needs to be made clear beyond all danger of mistake before we go any further. However much men may admire from a distance this supreme ethical standard of the Sermon on the Mount, they can never reach it merely by their own effort. The power comes from God Himself, and we must be dependent on Him every moment of the time, and not put our trust in

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ourselves or in anything that we can do. Only the pure "expulsive power of a new affection" can overcome those deep resentments of the heart in the face of injury which even a good man feels when a cruel wrong has been done and there is no sign of repentance. Only the love of God within the heart can avail then. The father's love in the parable of the Prodigal Son could win back at last the one who had gone astray. The elder brother's superior righteousness could never have won him back, because there was no overflowing love in his heart.

We may, perhaps, paraphrase in a very simple manner the central teaching of Jesus at the end of this first chapter of the Sermon on the Mount as follows:

"If you are truly to be My disciples, then you must be ready to go to extreme lengths of forbearance and also of love in seeking to win people from the side of evil to the side of goodness. Any mere passive resistance of evil is not sufficient. Any mere lukewarm love is not enough. There must be active, positive goodness. There must be burning love, so vital and so contagious that every barrier raised up by evil will be broken down and the hardest heart will be won. Even if it means suffering and death itself to the one who thus shows his love. Negative goodness and affection won't do at all, for they are like salt without savour and a light which does not shine brightly. You, who are My disciples, must be on fire with love! You must be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

## Chapter IX

### THE PRACTICAL TEST



THE question may well be asked whether this idealism of the Sermon on the Mount, which is so admirable in sentiment, does not break down when it is put to the practical test of war itself. If war comes in defence of our own people, how should we act?

This challenge needs to be answered in the concrete manner in which it is put forward, and I shall relate some of my own reactions to it. Later on we shall consider together some of the social evils which lead on to war, and we shall seek to find out whether it is possible *within the social order itself* to set up Christ's standard.

I remember how, during the World War of 1914-1918, Rabindranath Tagore asked me with impatience, "What are you Christians doing? You have the clearest moral precepts in the Sermon on the Mount? Why do you not act up to them?"

It is with a sense of shame that I look back on this part of my life and recall how in the early days of the war I did not realise, amid the first enthusiasms, the vast seriousness of the issue.\*

The righteousness of the Allied cause, when Belgium was invaded, occupied my whole mind and transcended every other consideration. There was so

\* In what follows, I have drawn freely on what I wrote in Chapter xvii of "What I Owe to Christ," which was written ten years ago when the incident was more fresh in my mind.

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much that was good and noble in the manner in which the best of the youth of my own country stepped into the ranks without a murmur and were ready to go to their death on behalf of a cause which they believed to be true and just. If I had been in England at that time I should certainly have offered to go out in some capacity, either as chaplain or as a hospital worker.

But I was not really facing, as yet, the main principle involved—namely, whether we could possibly as Christians love our enemies, the Germans, while taking part in a violent war of this kind against them. This hesitation to face the main issue (which was kept like a skeleton in the cupboard) proved an exceedingly costly mistake and led to my undoing. For owing to the contagion of the war fever, I found myself being carried away by the strong currents of indignation which led directly on to contempt and hate. The words of the Sermon on the Mount about the sin of anger, in its two forms of hatred and contempt, came very near to revealing my own condemnation. For as I followed with feverish eagerness every scrap of news, day by day, I could almost feel within me, even at such a distance as India, the passions rising.

But in more sober moments I began to despise myself for this drift with the tide, and soon started to revolt against it. Tagore had pointed me to my own scriptures, and I went back to them with alarm. For, as he had rightly said, we Christians had the clearest moral precepts, without any intention of acting up to them. Still further, in spite of all the specious subtlety of war propaganda, it became clear to me that hatred and contempt of the enemy were being sedulously fostered by a torrent of lies that were known to be lies by those who spread them abroad.

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The scales suddenly fell from my eyes. When I went back again to the words of Jesus, I could hardly bear to read them because of the shame in my own heart that I had gone so near to betraying Him. For I saw at last with perfect clearness that there could be no halting between two opinions, no serving God and mammon.

The whole conception of God which I had received from Christ was plainly at stake. Either I must choose the tribal idea of God from the Old Testament times, or else Christ's idea of God from the New Testament. In the end I saw that I had been going back to the bitter hates and passions of the tribe, and had betrayed the higher conception of a common humanity in which we were all one family and one household together, with one Father of us all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.

Thus even before the question of military service came up, as it did in India later, I had fully made up my mind not to serve. When, therefore, the direct issue arose at last, I had no hesitation in refusal. In the end, it is true, I did not have to suffer imprisonment, though I was quite prepared to do so. But this decision to go to prison for my faith if required set my mind free, and the relief that came with it was immediate.

Soon after this the positive thought came home to me that I had received from earliest childhood a commission from Christ Himself to take part in His battle "against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to continue His faithful soldier and servant to my life's end."\* For Christ's own warfare, on behalf of all the downtrodden peoples of the world, had to be fought;

\* This is a portion of the Service of Holy Baptism.

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and He was calling me to fight the good fight in this wider sphere of love and peace.

This, then, was my own reaction and that of countless others both during and after the war. But the most difficult question, which still arises from this part of our Lord's teaching, remains to be considered. What is its relation to society? Are these extreme lengths of forbearance and love in the face of evil possible, not merely for the individual, but also in social practice?

This same question will come up again in a new form at the end of the second portion of the Sermon, where we are told to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (or justice), but we must try to obtain some answer to it here, in relation to Christ's own standard: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

It has been brought prominently forward by many of the noblest men and women who are troubled over these vast questions of war and peace, of socialism and capitalism, etc., that while this lavish generosity of forgiveness which Jesus always advocates and puts into practice may have its good effect as a means of winning over the individual to a higher life and may thus penetrate society, it is not a practical proposition when applied to two opposing social systems. Here, it is argued, the Law of even-handed 'justice' acts in an impersonal manner. It is therefore claimed that Jesus in this Teaching on the Mount was training a band of followers rather than establishing the groundwork of a new society.

We may grant, as I have tried to show, that the primary appeal of Jesus was always to the inner life of the individual. As the Sermon itself declares later on, there must be no attempt to reform others while the

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evil remains deep-seated in ourselves; for that is sheer hypocrisy. We must never seek to pluck the mote out of our brother's eye while neglecting to cast out the beam which is in our own eye. "Thou hypocrite," said Jesus, "first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

Nowhere is Christ's teaching more insistent on the fact that our own characters as reformers must first be tested and proved to be trustworthy before we attempt to reform others. We must therefore, first of all, look inward and purge from our own lives anything that offends.

To do this thoroughly, Love must come at the centre of our lives in such a manner that each of us is prepared for any sacrifice. We cannot go too far here, both in self-effacement as far as injuries against ourselves are concerned and in love towards the wrong-doer. We must be ready like Jesus Himself to pray for our murderers if ever the occasion arises. That is His absolute standard, and He will never lower it.

But when we have to do with enormous social evils, which destroy millions of souls and make a wholesome life next to impossible for vast masses of the poor, are we then merely to fight a solitary battle in order to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" while we drift along with the tide all the while and acquiesce in the evil system socially? Or is there here a Way of Life, a Law of Love, whereby evil socially as well as individually may be overcome by good?

It is one of the strangest phenomena of our modern age that those who have made us face this social aspect of evil have not been orthodox Christians, but men who either discarded 'religion' altogether, like Karl

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Marx, or were excommunicated, like Leo Tolstoy, or belonged by birth to another religion, like Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Strangest of all, perhaps, is this, that Mahatma Gandhi, a Hindu, should have pointed us so nearly towards a truly Christian solution and have carried it out so far in action as to make it appear practicable to some of the finest Christians of our own day.

Let us, first of all, get as far together as we can in those matters wherein most of us would be agreed. Even today it is surely practicable and feasible for Christians, not only individually, but in groups, to renounce superfluous wealth and live in the simplest manner possible, which will make them more at one with their poorer neighbour, thus carrying out a voluntary communism of a high order. Christians may also go to the furthest length in loving other peoples and races in such a way that for them war becomes quite unthinkable an anachronism and an outrage.

If groups, as well as isolated individuals, sprang up everywhere, inspired by such a love of Christ for humanity, they would form 'cells' of new 'peace' and 'love' in the Body of Humanity which would multiply by their very contagion of attractiveness wherever the faith of Christ was truly held and taught. Such a Way of Life would come very near to that of the early Church, when no one said that aught of the things that he possessed was his own, but they had all things common (Acts 4. 32) who, when they were persecuted for their faith, said quietly, "We ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts 5. 29), and went to prison joyfully without a word, rejoicing that they "were counted worthy to suffer shame" for the name of Jesus their Master (Acts 5. 41). When we come still further on in the Sermon on the Mount, the further lesson

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will be taught us that we should have our Master's spirit of joy and love, not merely for all peoples and races, but also for God's animate and inanimate creation, which is a sacrament before us day by day revealing the love and goodness of our heavenly Father (Matt. 6. 26-30).

In setting forward this standard to be followed in our dealings with our fellow-men we are clearly claiming a sovereign faith in what George Fox called "that of God in every man," which, as it is led from within by the Spirit of God, is bound to respond to the supreme appeal which we make to love and truth. In such a faith and trust we are surely following Christ's own example, and we may do so with perfect confidence. For if anything is clear from the Gospel story it is this, that, knowing the evil that was in the world and in the heart of man, He yet retained His own unbounded faith that goodness would in the end prevail. He saw this goodness, still a flame beneath the surface, in Mary Magdalene, out of whom He cast seven evil spirits, and in the woman "who was a sinner" who came to Him in the house of Simon. He called Levi the publican to follow Him, and also Zacchæus, though they belonged to a trade that was despised and hated by the Jews. He gained the name of being the "Friend of publicans and sinners." For He saw right through to the inner man or woman, and won them back to goodness by His own faith in them when everyone else condemned them and treated them as outcast. In this attitude towards human nature we must take the utmost care that we follow His example and count nothing 'common' or 'unclean,' from whatever source it comes.

If, then, we become thus taught by Him and disci-

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plined in our own hearts by living as nearly as we are able in the way that He lived, ready at a moment's notice to sacrifice comforts for His sake, and if also we have made experiments in living together as a voluntary society on a full Christian basis, then we shall be ready later on to further and to consider on the largest scale possible the vast world problems, both with regard to militarism, on the one hand, and the vast accumulation of money in private hands, on the other. We shall have in this latter connection to consider both economic and racial imperialism and see how they support the militarist position and make it still more intolerable to Christians whose Way of Life is contained in the Sermon on the Mount.

In all these thoughts on the wider world issues we shall turn to the remarkable account given by our Lord Himself of His own temptations in the wilderness, when He was tempted to set up the Kingdom of His Father on earth by using compromises with violence and untruth in one form or another. We shall see how He determined that only by overcoming evil with good and untruth by truth could the reign of God be established on the earth.

We shall not, therefore, be tempted by 'short-cuts' whereby so-called reforms may be accomplished; for we shall be warned by our Lord Himself that where the house has been "empty, swept, and garnished" with respect to old evils the reaction is certain to come, unless the house is occupied at once with the things that make for righteousness, and a new spirit of love and truth enters in and takes possession. We shall remember how patiently God Himself has waited for man to respond freely and voluntarily to His own good gifts of reconciliation and peace.

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It will not be possible, nor would it be advisable, to consider at length in such a commentary as this the detailed questions which must at once arise when we set up the standard of the Sermon on the Mount as a measuring-line wherewith to measure the outstanding problems of our own age. That must be done by the reader himself. But it may be well to consider three great issues which have already been referred to above.

(1) I cannot regard the modern industrial system, which sets a premium on ruthless and unlimited competition, and leads directly to monopolies holding mankind to ransom, as at all compatible with the standard of truth, purity, and honesty required by the Sermon on the Mount. The very phrase "business is business" serves to show that mammon is being served rather than God. The predatory nature of economic imperialism has been again and again exposed and condemned from a Christian standpoint, and the time has come for the Church of Christ to set its face steadily against it as demoralising and debasing, leading to the most cruel and heartless destruction of millions of human lives through unemployment and malnutrition, while a handful of individuals and families at the top have money at their disposal beyond the dreams of avarice and spend it too often in suicidal luxuries and follies. Daniel Webster said long ago, "The freest Government cannot long endure when the tendency of the law is to create a rapid accumulation of property in the hands of a few and to render the masses poor and dependent." No society can be built up which includes truth, love, mercy, and justice between man and man on such unstable foundations. No amount of private benefactions by a few indi-

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viduals will make a system so essentially vicious as this tolerable to a Christian who seeks to live by the standard of the Sermon on the Mount.

(2) The racial imperialism, which has used every violent and untruthful means to bring into subjection other races and gain what is called an 'empire' stands equally condemned by the standard of the Sermon on the Mount. "What is Imperialism," said Lord Rosebery, "but the Predominance of Race?" We might add, "What is Christianity but the Fellowship of Race?" For we have the often repeated word of the Apostle, "Ye have put on the new Man [humanity], where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." If we take seriously the Golden Rule which Christ gives us in the Sermon on the Mount, it comes to the same thing. During a long lifetime in which I have travelled many hundreds of thousands of miles by sea and land, chiefly in British territory, I have been saddened beyond measure to find racial and colour-bar legislation increasing instead of diminishing during the last forty years. There is no clear sign as yet that the Christian Church as a whole has been able to rid itself of this most serious evil, which is like a poison introduced into the Body of Christ, corrupting it from within.

(3) Concerning militarism as a system in modern times, which is intimately bound up with the whole capitalist system, there is hardly any need to write at length in order to show that it is utterly and entirely contrary to the spirit and also the letter of the Sermon on the Mount. It was truly stated at the beginning of the late World War that the one book which would have to be closed until the war was over was the

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Sermon on the Mount. Every line of it is a condemnation of the fratricidal wickedness of modern warfare. It is no more possible to carry on modern war on the principle of "Love your enemies" than it is to mix oil and water together. It cannot be accomplished. Apart even from the murderous hate that is sedulously engendered as a motive power, and the insane cruelty that is caused by bombing aeroplanes and the like, there is the further breakdown of every moral principle in turn. Truth is made the first sacrifice. Treachery becomes a virtue if wrought for one's country. Lust as well as brutality become rapidly the commonplaces of everyday life. War is hell. This is the oft-repeated verdict of soldiers and officers, and it is true.\*

Here, then, in these three great issues, which in a singular manner are intertwined and hang together, we have social evils developed into world systems which are contrary to the mind of Christ. It may be possible to pick here and there a quotation from the New Testament and put it forward in defence of one or other of them, just as it was possible to quote scripture in favour of slavery more than a century ago. But no one dreams of defending slavery today, or of calling it 'Christian'; and it may be fervently hoped that, a century hence, these three evils, which an Indian poet has called "War Lust, Race Lust, Gold Lust," will be at last completely divorced from the Christian Gospel, in which they have no place.†

The further we study these modern systems, which have their deep roots in selfishness, pride, and greed of possession, the more clearly is it seen that they are

\* Satyendranath Datta.

† See Note 2 at the end of the chapter.

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entirely alien from both the spirit and the letter of the Sermon on the Mount, which begins:

Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Blessed are they that mourn.

Blessed are the meek.

The answer that was made in earlier days against slavery as a system, that the whole spirit of Christ's teaching is against the enslavement of one man by another, is equally valid in these directions also. To go over the ground again in order to make this plain beyond a doubt:

(1) The modern business system, which leads, as I have said, to multi-millionaires on one side and millions of starving unemployed on the other, stands self-condemned according to all Christian thinking. The only question that remains is how to get rid of such an evil system by entirely truthful, upright, and non-violent means and without raising up a fresh crop of evils in their turn; for clearly the economic slavery produced today by unlimited industrial competition carries with it all the evils of the old slavery in a new form.

(2) The imperialist system, which keeps in subjection other races by a ruthless application of force in order to build up an 'empire' on race supremacy, stands equally condemned according to all Christian thinking; for it is virtually a condition of 'race slavery,' carrying the marks of the old individual slavery upon it in a more extended form. Only those who have suffered cruel indignities and humiliations under it can understand how fearful the curse is. The sin of 'Raca,' or Contempt, is always near at hand, bringing its own punishment of murder upon the imperialist

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people. For it is possible by contempt and pride to murder the soul of a weaker race.

(3) The militarist system, with a world war as its end, stands even more condemned according to all Christian thinking. For it tends to enslave the whole world by violence and terror, greed and fear, and carries once more all the marks of the old slavery upon it. Liberty of any kind is denied, under the dread of concentration camps and 'purges.'

For where social evils have grown so rank as these the vital question is not whether the systems themselves can be defended—for that is impossible from any Christian standpoint. No! The question of all questions is how to free humanity from the vicious circle in which it has become involved; how to set up other principles—economic, racial, national—which will lead us nearer to the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, instead of leading us away farther from it.

If the general interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount which is here offered is accepted and acted out by bodies of people, devoted to Christ as their Lord and Master, and living His way of life, then it would seem to me that, just as slavery, in the fullness of time, was declared to be unchristian by general consent a century ago, so a final blow might be struck today by the compelling power of Christian Love against these new social evils of our own times.

Evils no less great than these have been overcome in the past by the power of the same Spirit; we therefore believe with all our heart and soul, as Christians, that these evils will become a thing of the past when once the Church awakes to the great task which is set before it.

NOTE

While the words of the Sermon on the Mount, "Love your enemies," are so clear that it would have seemed impossible that fratricidal wars could have been carried on all these centuries by Christians, in direct contradiction to His teaching, nevertheless we find historically that this social evil of the first magnitude has increased both in its range and in its virulence in modern times, instead of becoming an anachronism to be abolished as slavery was abolished last century, chiefly by Christian influence and enthusiasm.

We have the plainest records during the first two centuries that Christians in the early days of the Church refused to take any part in war, as it was contrary to their Christian Faith. Two references may suffice. Justin Martyr states, "We may not only refrain from making war upon our enemies, but also we may not lie to or deceive them" (*Apology*, 1. 39). Celsus, the opponent of Christianity, asks, "What would become of the defence of the Roman Empire if all the inhabitants became Christian?"

This attitude towards war, which was strong while the Church was a persecuted minority, became weak as the Church grew in power and became State protected. It was left to bodies of Christians, which were not regarded as orthodox, to hold fast to the principle that war was impossible for a Christian. Among the Montanists this belief continued, but in the Dark Ages it was entirely blotted out. At the dawn of the Middle Ages both the Cathari and Albigenses held the doctrine, though they did not always carry it out

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in action. Within the Church the two saints that came nearest to the standard of the Sermon on the Mount were St. Francis of Assisi, who went into the soldiers' camp unarmed, and Raymond Lull, who was one of the very first to protest against the bloodthirsty horrors of the Crusades.

The Lollards, in England, maintained that "men of war" are not allowed by the Gospel; the "Friends of God" in Europe held the same doctrine, proclaiming that Muslims and Jews ought to be loved by Christians. They quoted our Lord's words in the Sermon on the Mount.

The strongest single witness before the Reformation was Peter Chelchizki, the follower of John Huss of Bohemia. He pleaded with his companions not to take up arms to defend the Reformed Faith. "I have learnt," he declared openly, "from Christ, and by Christ I stand."

The Society of Friends, called the Quakers, under George Fox, adopted from the beginning the attitude that it was wrong for a Christian to take up arms with the intention of slaughter. The Quakers have now maintained the position in the face of incessant persecution for nearly three centuries. To their testimony, more than that of any other, Christ's Teaching in the Sermon on the Mount has been recovered and taken seriously in modern times. It has no longer been explained away as a romantic but unpractical ideal.

Jacob Boehme, the German Silesian mystic, represented the same teaching in Eastern Europe, and the Moravians at Herrnhut, in their world-wide missionary enterprise, refused all armed protection and were essentially a peace-loving community.

In the modern age the conversion of Leo Tolstoi,

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through reading the Sermon on the Mount, to the complete pacifist position is one of the greatest landmarks of recent history on the subject. Not only did he make Christ's teaching about non-resistance and loving one's enemies the centre of all his thinking, but he lived this doctrine himself to the very end of his life, and spent endless trouble in defending and finding a home in Canada for Dukhobors, who were a community of passive resisters.

But greater still than Tolstoi's own work has been that of his spiritual successor, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, both in South Africa and India. Gandhi himself is not a Christian, but a Hindu; and he has found the doctrine of returning good for evil in his own Hindu scriptures, especially in the Jain and Buddhist tradition. In his first youthful days he owed the greatest debt of gratitude to Leo Tolstoi, with whom he corresponded. He was specially helped by his book, "The Kingdom of God is within You," which is a practical exposition of the Sermon on the Mount. The great Russian was the hero of young Gandhi's early days. With Mohandas Gandhi the carrying out of these pacifist principles which the Sermon on the Mount embodies has been carried a long step further forward by his remarkable insight and genius in organising such a wide corporate faith in non-violence among very ordinary people that thousands have gone joyfully to prison in order to attain their ends by non-violent and truthful means.

Now at last in the West, at the end of all this long development outside the main body of the Christian Church and by other religious leaders, large groups of Christians have banded themselves together as brothers, with the determination to carry out the prin-

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ciple of the Sermon on the Mount, "Love your enemies," to the utmost of their power, while gladly expressing a willingness to suffer for their convictions as in the first day of the Church. A movement has begun which is gathering momentum every day and capturing the hearts of the noblest of the young, both men and women. They refuse any longer to minimise or explain away Christ's words, and are ready to carry out His principles in practice to the fullest extent of their powers, both in their individual lives and also in the corporate life wherever they are permitted to do so. (I have been indebted to Marjorie Sykes for her admirable little pamphlet on this subject, entitled "Non-Violence and the Christian Church.")

## Chapter X

### THE DANGER OF HYPOCRISY



*“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the street, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward” (Matt. 6. 1-5).*

(1) THERE is some uncertainty in the text of the first verse. The best Greek manuscripts read, “Take heed that ye do not your *righteousness* before men,” and this makes good sense, because the three duties of the Jewish religion—prayer, almsgiving, and fasting—were called ‘righteousness’ in a technical sense, and this appears to be the sense here.

(2) The word ‘openly’ should be omitted at the end of this passage and the two parallel passages. It has probably crept in from the margin. The phrase should read, “Thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.”

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(3) Moffatt translates, "Your Father who sees *what is secret*," instead of "who seeth in secret." This translation goes back to the Aramaic, which Dr. Torrey suggests is the original form of our Lord's words. If this reading is taken, it is akin to St. Paul's phrase in 1 Cor. 2. 10, where he writes, "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." God, who searches the innermost secrets of our hearts and knows our innermost thoughts, shall recompense us.

(4) The hyperbole "Do not sound a trumpet before thee" should not be taken as referring to what actually happened in our Lord's time. He is using a phrase which no one forgets, so as to draw a picture of ostentatious almsgiving. He speaks in 'picture' language, and this makes His pointed phrases ever remembered.

(5) It should be noted that under the word 'alms' are considered all our religious duties towards our fellow-men; under 'prayer' our duties towards God; under 'fasting' our duties towards ourselves. Each of these three duties has its definite part in the religious life of a sincere and good man. Our Lord commends them as such; but He points out at the same time the terrible danger always present of *self-righteousness*. We shall notice this in all the three instances which our Lord brings forward. It is the besetting sin of those who lay too much stress on outward observance; but it may creep in unawares into the most spiritual religion.

In the earlier portions of the Sermon the standard of purity, truth, and uprightness, leading on to the great climax of love even for those who hate us, has been set up quite uncompromisingly by our Lord Jesus Christ. No religious standard could possibly reach higher than this. Jesus realises how high are

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His demands and establishes them entirely in God. Only the poor in spirit, the lowly, the contrite, and the meek, whose trust is in God's grace, can ever hope to attain to such a standard of inner uprightness of heart. Human effort sinks before it.

Yet just here—at this very point—is the most subtle danger. For the snare immediately comes of taking to oneself some measure of self-praise, where God alone should be glorified. The higher spiritual righteousness, which has only been made possible by God's exceeding grace, may rapidly decline into self-righteousness—to be "seen of men," to obtain their reward, to seek their praise. Wherever that happens we can see at once that all is ruined: all the graciousness goes out of what we do.

In a world-wide movement called the Oxford Group, from which I have personally received great spiritual benefit and with which I have been identified, there are four 'absolutes' very often mentioned—namely, honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love. It is of the greatest help to test one's own life by these standards. In the end, however, the most searching test of all comes from those blessings with which our Lord *begins* the Sermon on the Mount:

Blessed are the poor in spirit.  
Blessed are they that mourn.  
Blessed are the meek.

Jesus, who knew what was in man, placed these in the very front of all, because apart from them this subtle danger of self-praise continually ruins the very best of all our undertakings. Wherever it occurs we lose the secret of all our strength in God.

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The publican, who could only look down to the ground and cry, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," had reached a standard of spiritual righteousness far higher than the virtuous Phariſee, who prayed, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." "The publican," said Jesus, "went back to his house justified [made righteous] rather than the other: For everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18. 14).

The difference between 'ethics' and 'religion' is this, that in religion all our thoughts, aspirations, and desires are centred in God, and every part of our nature cries out with the Psalmist:

"Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks,  
So longeth my soul after thee, O God.  
My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living  
God.  
When shall I come to appear before the presence  
of God?"

So long as this longing for God is deep in our inmost nature the very thought of self-display or self-credit or self-praise becomes unbearable. To quote St. Paul's concise phrase, we are not under Law, but under grace. We declared with the Apostle, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross" (Gal. 6, 14).

*"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which*

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*seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (Matt. 6. 5-8).*

The key-note of this passage is a verse which gives us in the fewest words the true manner of prayer.

(1) We have already noted Moffat's rendering, "who seeth that which is secret." If this is taken, it means that God sees the innermost thoughts of our hearts, which are laid bare before Him. Nothing is hidden between our souls and God.

(2) The words "inner chamber" are taken from the prophet Isaiah: "Come, my people, enter into thy inner chamber and shut thy doors about thee." We should, of course, treat these words as poetry rather than prose. It is possible to enter into the inner chamber of the heart and shut the door upon the world, even in the most crowded thoroughfare, if we have learnt the way to God's inner presence where He meets us in secret. It is true, of course, that we may retire in a literal sense and shut the door; but the essence of Christ's poetical phrase is that inner retirement, where we meet God in silence and alone and listen for His word to us, as well as speak to Him what is in our hearts. Tennyson has well said:

"Speak to Him, thou, for He heareth,  
And spirit with Spirit can meet.  
Nearer is He than breathing,  
Closer than hands and feet."

(3) For such silent communion with the Father an unruffled mind is needed. Not only must the door be

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shut, but there must be quietness and peace within; the noise of the world must be shut out. One of the saints of the desert told a young aspirant to bring him some water in an earthen vessel from a shallow pool. The water that he brought was muddy. "Let it remain still," said the old man. Then after a time the mud settled down and the water was clear.

"Your own life," said the saint, "has been like that turbid water; but if you enter the silence with God, your heart will become clean like this water, and you will be able to reflect God, who can only be seen and known by the pure in heart."\*

(4) The Greek word (*battalogein*) used for pagan prayers of the magical type is a rare one which is almost equivalent to the English word 'babble.' Moffatt translates, "Do not pray by idle rote." The characteristic of such use of magical formulæ, vainly repeated, is that the one who prays has the thought latent in his mind while doing so that such repetition of a sacred name or formula is going to get something out of God which He is unwilling to give. Such an idea is the exact opposite of true Christian prayer. Jesus tells us that God is more than anxious to give to us, and also knows what things we have need of even before we ask Him. He is ever "*more* ready to hear than we to pray," as the collect says, and is "*wont* to give more than either we desire or deserve."† We are to approach God just as children approach their dearly loved Father, not as the pagan worshippers approach an unknown god of dread and fear.

Here, then, is our first lesson with regard to prayer. We are to come with the complete childlike trust of

\* See Helen Waddell, "The Desert Fathers," p. 95.

† Collect for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

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little children to the heart of One who loves us and knows far better than ourselves what our needs are and what will be their best fulfilment. Our prayer is essentially heartfelt longing and communion; and it is only as little children that we can enter that Kingdom of Heaven which it brings to those who have learnt its lessons truly.

Christian prayer, therefore, has to lose every touch of the magical and irrational, the ceremonial and formal, and become as natural as a child breathing and speaking. In its essence it is the response of the Father to the child and the child to the Father. Whatever is contrary to this spirit is not Christian prayer at all.

*“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name.*

*“Give us this day our daily bread.*

*“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom; and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”*

(1) By the words “After this manner pray ye” Jesus means that we should pray according to the *principles* which He lays down. He does not mean that we should endlessly repeat the Lord’s Prayer; for that would soon tend to become a ‘vain repetition.’ It is easy to follow His meaning in this way. Our own natural inclination in beginning our prayer would be to think first of ourselves and our own immediate needs. We might pray, for instance, “My Father, give me this day my daily bread,” where self comes in at every turn. Jesus reverses this order. We are to seek, first of all, to surrender our little selves and our selfish needs into His keeping and begin with the hallowing of His name.

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Adoration and thanksgiving are to be the first things to fill the mind, so that we may be entirely one with His great purpose. Then and then only should we bring forward our daily needs.

(2) The next important point, which becomes quite clear in the Greek, is that the words "on earth, as it is in heaven" should go with all the three earliest petitions. We might state the three clauses as follows:

Our heavenly father, may thy name be hallowed  
here on earth,  
may thy kingdom come here  
on earth,  
may thy will be done here  
on earth,  
as it is in heaven.

(3) The word for 'daily' bread is a very rare one. Perhaps the rendering nearest to the Greek is "bread for the coming day," and therefore our proverbial phrase 'daily bread' is fairly accurate.

(4) In Luke the words of the Lord's Prayer are still shorter than in Matthew, though the structure of the prayer remains unchanged. The text reads as follows: "Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. Give us this day our daily bread. And pardon our sins as we forgive all those who are indebted to us. And do not bring us into temptation." It would seem that the prayer was taught thus in its earliest form. The further clause, "but deliver us from evil," may have been added, either on another occasion by our Lord Himself or by the early Church. It helps to explain the difficult phrase "Lead us not into temptation."

(5) It was generally held, in our Lord's time, that

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the coming of God's Kingdom was to be accompanied by an hour of vast suffering and trial, which was called in prophetic language "the birth-pangs of the Messiah." Our Lord appears to refer to this when describing the woes which would precede the coming of His kingdom. "Watch, therefore," He says, "and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." It may be that our Lord had in mind this great 'temptation' or 'hour of darkness' which He Himself had to pass through and which all His followers might also have to endure. Knowing their own weakness, they would pray that they might not be caught unawares, "for as a snare," Jesus had said, "shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth."

The word 'bring us' (or 'lead us') not into temptation is not a satisfactory translation of the Greek, which goes back to the original Aramaic word. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when the hour of darkness came upon Jesus, He said to His disciples, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." The word in the Lord's Prayer is the active form of this verb 'to enter.' The sense requires 'let us not enter,' and this is probably as near as we can get to the transitive or active form of the verb 'to enter.' The two last clauses are really one petition, "Let us not enter into temptation, but, if we have to do so, deliver us from evil."

While with both the clauses "Thy kingdom come" and "Let us not enter into temptation" there is an allusion to the Kingdom of the Messiah which was at hand, it is quite possible to employ the phrases in a universal sense, so that the whole prayer can be used in any century and by any people.

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(6) The doxology at the end of the prayer is an addition of the early Church at a time when the Lord's Prayer was used at the very centre of Eucharistic worship. It is not found in any of our earliest manuscripts.

## Appendix FIRST AIDS TO PRAYER



RECENT enquiry has shown that the old traditional habits of prayer which were taught us from our childhood are tending to disappear in the present generation. How far this has already gone it is difficult to say positively; but the result must be very serious indeed, because it coincides with a time in our history when, owing to our new ways of living at much greater speed than before, we tend to make even our time for prayer limited. In my own experience I am painfully aware how difficult it has been to maintain the life of prayer with regularity and spontaneity. The difficulty has seemed to increase rather than diminish as the years go by.

It may be well, therefore, to repeat in a more detailed manner at the end of this book some of the first aids to the life of prayer which have been already mentioned in the text, thus giving further help and guidance. The suggestions which follow are nothing more than hints that may be laid aside as soon as ever the principles underlying them are put into practice and the desire to pray becomes instinctive. I shall write as one who has been struggling all my life to learn more fully, even through continual failure and disheartenment, what may be truly called the Art of Prayer.

## *Appendix*

### THANKSGIVING

At the very first moment when one is ready, after rising, before other thoughts intrude, we need to set our minds upon God and to lift up our hearts in thankfulness to Him for His infinite goodness and mercy. Jesus tells us that the first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength. When He said these words He was quoting from the Old Testament. For this Way of Life is the royal highway which has been followed by saints and sages in all generations. They have thus "walked with God." God has been "in all their thoughts."

How, then, let us ask ourselves, can we fulfil this first commandment so that God may remain "in all our thoughts" throughout the day? How can we love Him "with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength"?

One of the simplest methods is to begin the day with thanksgiving. Before anything else, let us lift our hearts to God in adoration and thanksgiving.

It will be a help to us if we have our own manuscript book wherein to write neatly with a loving hand passages of Scripture that we shall constantly use. This book should be filled up only by slow degrees just as we find one after another of those precious words of life that appeal to us most of all. It will be best to begin with passages of thanksgiving from the Bible. To give a few examples, it might contain verses from such psalms as 23, 63, 103, 145. There are also some very beautiful benedictions that may be entered in our manuscript from the Book of Revelation. The end

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of Revelation 7, verse 9, beginning, "After this I beheld . . ." might be reproduced in full. The benediction from 1 Peter 1. 3-9, and the last verses of Romans 8 from the thirty-fifth verse might be included. Again, there will be special verses from Ephesians, and the Hymn of Charity from 1 Corinthians 13. Then the Beatitudes of Matthew 5. 3-12 might be written in. Portions also of St. John, such as, for instance, John 14, verse 27; and 17, verses 24 to end. These are only bare suggestions, not at all to be followed exclusively.

This thankfulness to God for His goodness should not be merely repeated from Scripture. The practice in the early morning should tend to become more personal and individual. It ought, therefore, to lead on to our own individual and personal act of worship, praise, and thanksgiving while we lift up our hearts in love. We may only be able at first to repeat again and again, "O my Father, I love Thee, I love Thee." But if this springs from the heart it will be far better than many words. We shall soon find, however, that the very words which we have learnt by heart from Holy Scripture will return to the mind and become our own words.

But our danger at first, I am afraid—if I must confess my own weakness—will be an inclination to cut short this part of our morning worship, or else to continue it in a formal manner. This may happen to us because the gravitation of our thoughts is pulling us all the while downwards to turn to our own wants and cares. But this, as I have repeatedly asserted, is all wrong. It cannot be anything else than wrong, for it leads on to an acute anxiety complex—how well I know it!—which is not really Christian prayer at all.

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If we give way to this temptation instead of following the way which Christ has taught us in His own prayer, we shall be in danger of passing our days with fear in our hearts instead of love and joy and peace. If ever we find ourselves becoming entangled in that vicious circle, it simply means for us that we must return to that 'first love,' when joy was spontaneous and could not be restrained. For only the joy of the love of God can cast out that fear which "hath torment."

When Bernard kept awake one night in order that he might gain an insight into the prayers of Francis of Assisi, he found that his whole prayer was pure adoration. "My God and my All," the saint kept on repeating all through the night, with tears of joy. And he could get no further.

No wonder that Francis was called 'God's Troubadour' and sang for joy the 'Canticle of the Sun.'

## GUIDANCE

When we thus become absorbed in hallowing our Father's name and loving Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, then a pause may be needed, a time of expectation, as we seek to know from God Himself what He would have us do throughout the day. We have to lay bare our hearts before Him and with awe and silence remain in His presence. As a preparation for that stillness we shall often be helped most of all by remaining in a purely waiting attitude of complete silence, without even a thought of our own. At other times, as a prelude to that stillness, the collect may help us which runs:

"Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are

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hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee and worthily magnify Thy holy Name, through Christ our Lord."

It would be difficult to find words more suitable than these. After this prayer has been offered we may remain in silence, closing the door to the world and waiting for God's message as He leads us forward for the work of the day.

### **INTERCESSION**

Then there are other prayers that may follow, after God's guidance has been sought and found. Those who are most dear to us will come before us, one by one, almost instinctively, according to our love for them, and we shall leave them in our Father's care. We shall also pray for forgiveness and strength and love renewed.

Quite possibly we may write out some of these daily 'prayers of remembrance' in our manuscript book for our home, for our country, for the world. But even when we thus bring before God our dearest friends and their own needs and remember also our own shortcomings and seek forgiveness, we shall neither lose our inward peace nor fall back into doubt and care. For we shall end the morning quiet, just as we began it, with a burst of praise. Just as the 'Lord's Prayer' begins with adoration and ends with the doxology, "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen," even so we shall end with praise also.

It is not at all my purpose, or even advisable, to go further than I have done in thus offering these first

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aids to prayer; for it might merely weaken initiative and thus stand in the way of the supreme effort being carried on by oneself, with all the inspiration that God supplies to those who humbly entreat Him. I have also given hints in the text of this book itself as to the course that may be followed during the rest of the day. Everyone who has sought to offer guidance in the spiritual life has pointed out that the night, with its quiet sleep at the end of the day, is the symbol of the close of our own mortal existence here on earth, and therefore a time when we should renew with love and awe our sense of forgiveness at the foot of the Cross, and receive into our hearts that peace which comes from God. Just as the morning, to the Christian, begins with praise and thanksgiving, so the evening ends with peace and forgiveness.



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